



## Window on Jordan

## True love: Can't live without it, yet who can afford it?

By Ibtisam Awadat

Special to The Star

"I got married at the age of 40, and now I am paying the price as far as my health is concerned," said a school teacher. "I married the man who came forward to ask my hand in marriage because I wanted to take care of my sick mother," she continued. Her doctor told her that her two miscarriages were probably due to her age, adding that wanting to bear children in mid-life exposes women to increased health risks. Nevertheless, over the last five years it has become apparent that people are tending to marry

later rather than earlier. Among the many factors that account for the situation, money is the primary one. "I was engaged to a good man for three years, and then we were separated," said a receptionist who wished to remain anonymous. "My father demanded many things, some of which were unbelievable. At the end of our betrothal, my fiancé said that at this rate it would take him another 10 years of hard work to get married, so he broke off the engagement," she said. And as a result it is inevitable the young men and women that suffer the consequences. "I fell in love with her at the university, then

after our graduation I went to her house to meet her family," Ahmad explained. The girl's family almost ended the marriage before it got off the ground by demanding a huge dowry. This is to say nothing of the five-star wedding party, the house and the car they demanded of him. "How can a graduate fresh from school and still unemployed satisfy these impossible demands, especially if he is from the middle class?" Ahmad asked disbelievingly. Even so he spent more than

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# The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

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## Dramatic shoot-out caps investigation of high-profile crimes

By Star Staff Writer

A MAJOR step toward closing the casebook on a series of gruesome murders that sent shock-waves through the otherwise peaceful Kingdom was taken last week. A dramatic shoot-out that resulted in the death of one man and the arrest of a second, brought to a climax an investigation that resulted in the apprehension of a total of six suspects thought to be behind the crimes.

After extensive investigation, police surrounded what was presumed to be the hide-out of two of those thought to be involved in the murders of a dozen people in three separate incidents. The killings all took place in three residential areas in and around Amman—Al-Rabieh, Shmeisani and Wadi Al Sir—between January and April of this year.

The police, backed up by one of the military's Special Forces Units, headed by HRH Prince Abdullah, an army general, succeeded in ending a nine-hour siege that began in the early morning hours on Monday.

The joint operation led to the arrest of Mohammad Jaghabin, suspected of being the leader of a gang of six men thought to be behind the killings of the 12 people, one an Iraqi diplomat, gripped the public imagination.

Police say that another suspect, Jamal N., killed himself during the police raid on the two suspects' hiding place in the Sahlab area, a few kilometers south of the capital. However, several witnesses

at the scene said that Jamal had not killed himself, but came out of the building with a gun and began shooting at security forces who returned fire. Jamal was apparently killed in the exchange. Several policemen were also wounded in the raid.

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five influential Iraqis and three Egyptians were stabbed to death by masked attackers in the home of wealthy Iraqi businessman Sami George in Al-Rabieh. One of those killed was the Iraqi deputy chief of mission, Hikmat Al Hejju, along with his Egyptian wife.

Rasheed said the killers' real target was a third Iraqi businessman Nemier Ojji, who was one of the eight to die. He said Ojji incurred their wrath by accepting smuggled antiquities from Iraq and never paying for them.

"They gave him some

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Israeli border police push Palestinian Legislative Council members Azmi Shuaibi (left) and Hassan Asfour (2nd from left) away from Jewish settlers' tin shacks in the Old City of Jerusalem on Tuesday.

## Israelis, Palestinians clash at Old City building site

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—A melee erupted Tuesday in the Old City of Jerusalem as Palestinian legislators and residents protesting Jewish construction in the Muslim quarter clashed with Israeli police and Jewish settlers.

Several lawmakers were slightly injured as police wielding batons forced them to leave the site where settlers had put up seven temporary structures, strung Israeli flags and arranged for several families to move in.

A corrugated metal building swayed and crashed to the ground in a cloud of dust after Israeli and Palestinians scuffled inside it, prompting cheers from Palestinian onlookers.

Israeli officials admitted later that the building had been done without permits. A court ordered the work stopped and Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert—usually an outspoken supporter of Jewish settlement in east Jerusalem—said the structures would be torn down and the settlers evacuated.

"Building in Jerusalem is a very important and essential issue, but in every case it should take place according to the law," Olmert said.

Tuesday's incident was the latest in a series of confrontations in the walled Old City. Both sides said it illustrates that the conflict over Jerusalem, perhaps the most sensitive of the issues dividing Israelis and Palestinians, is heating up. Neither side shows any sign of compromise.

A spokeswoman for Ateret Cohanim, the nationalist-religious group that built the structures and claims ownership of the land, said the construction Tuesday was "the Zionist answer" to the recent stabbing death of a group member in the Old City. "This is the battle for Jerusalem," Kila Harnoy said. "This is about who will be the landlord of this city, whether it will be divided or not."

The speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, meanwhile, declared: "To hell with all the (peace) agreements if they will not save Jerusalem" for Palestinians, Ahmed Korei, who was the Palestine Liberation

Organization's chief negotiator on the landmark Oslo peace accords, rushed to the disputed site Tuesday with more than a dozen Palestinian legislators and other dignitaries to protest.

Saeed Erekat, the Palestinians' current chief negotiator with Israel, was pushed by border guards and fell but was uninjured. Faisal Hussein, the PLO's top representative in Jerusalem, and Palestinian Agriculture Minister Abdul Jawad Saleh suffered cuts on their arms, as police first tried forcefully to keep them from entering the site and then used further force to make them leave.

Israeli Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani later apologized to Korei and other senior Palestinian officials for their treatment by police and paramilitary border guards.

Erekat said he was grateful for the apology but said the Israeli government's support for building Jewish settlements in east Jerusalem was pushing the two sides toward violence, especially in the absence of

progress in peace negotiations. "We don't need it. We're at the edge," he said.

Israel won control of east Jerusalem from Jordan in the 1967 Six Day War and quickly declared the entire city its eternal capital. The annexation has not been recognized by most nations, including the United States, although Newt Gingrich, the US House speaker heading one of four visiting delegations of congressmen, again declared his support Tuesday for Israeli control over the city.

The disturbance comes in the wake of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rejection on Sunday of claims by Israeli opposition leaders that he is to blame for the long stalemate in peace negotiations, declaring that the peace process was in "dire straits" well before he took office two years ago.

"Negotiations had stopped on virtually every track," Netanyahu told the visiting group of US congressmen, apparently trying to halt grow-

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## Lenient attitude toward Iraq might prevail

By Craig Turner

UNITED NATIONS—For a year now, the big powers at the United Nations have been arguing about the best way to deal with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. The United States and Britain essentially see him as a criminal on parole who ought to be punished when he breaks the terms of his probation, while Russia, France and China suggest he ought to be encouraged toward rehabilitation.

The US view largely has prevailed, with the United Nations thumping Iraq with economic sanctions and the threat of military force when Baghdad has balked at demands that it dispose of its weapons of mass destruction.

But ever since U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan returned from Baghdad in February with a promise from Saddam to be more cooperative with UN weapons inspectors, officials here have adopted a more lenient posture toward Iraq. As a result, it appears that in the next few months the Russian-French-Chinese argument will get its first real test.

The latest evidence of the new attitude surfaced earlier this month, when the 15 members of the Security Council—including the United States—formally acknowledged Iraqi progress in dismantling the country's outlawed nuclear weapons research program.

The unanimously approved statement held out the possibility that, as soon as July, the Security Council officially might confirm that Iraq has met the terms of the 1991 Gulf War cease-fire requiring it to eliminate its atomic weapons capability.

That would be a first step toward lifting the oil embargo that has stifled the Iraqi economy. Many more steps are needed before the embargo could be removed—most notably proof that Iraq has disposed of its chemical and biological

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## Egypt unveils new improved Sphinx

By John Daniszewski

CAIRO—The Sphinx is 4,600 years old, but the last few have been tough ones.

First, there was a disastrous restoration project in the early 1980s in which many of its ancient stones were discarded and its north side was shored up with a layer of concrete, 9-feet thick in spots. But it later was found that, besides being ugly, the salt-laden concrete harmed the Sphinx's limestone core.

Then, there was the day in 1988 that a 700-pound chunk of its shoulder fell off, setting off a new, fierce debate over how best to save what is one of the world's best-known ancient monuments.

Finally there has been almost a decade

of slow preservation work, in which the Sphinx has been crawled over, poked, prodded and sheathed in scaffolding to the dismay of tourists.

But all that appears to be behind the Sphinx now.

With its inscrutable smile, it can look forward to being left alone, at least for a half-century or so, restorers say.

In a gala ceremony Monday—replete with symphonic and opera performances and a sound-and-light show—President Hosni Mubarak declared the Sphinx healed from its recent traumas.

The monument was then officially reopened by Federico Mayor, head of UNESCO, who observed that

"We have worked together to make sure the Sphinx of Giza remains a wonder of the world to come."

For Egypt, it is a matter of pride that the

entire \$2.5 million repair has been carried out by its own experts—geologists, archaeologists, artists and restorers. Zahi Hawass, the antiquities director of the Giza Plateau, who oversaw the project, got a presidential medal in gratitude.

Throughout the 20th century, monuments from Egypt's rich history have suffered from well-intended but misguided attempts at preservation. Foreign archaeologists have tended to give the Egyptians good marks for the effort to repair the Sphinx this time. But they deplore the fact that so much old stone had to be replaced with new. That, however, was unavoidable after the 1982-87 restoration, the one which Hawass said almost "killed" the Sphinx.

Carved from the limestone of the Giza Plateau to guard the ancient Egyptian necropolis, the Sphinx was a tourist attraction even in ancient times. It was first

restored by Pharaoh Tuthmosis IV, 1,000 years after it was built. Various Roman emperors, including Nero and Marcus Aurelius, also touched it up. But it survived most of its existence buried up to its neck in the sands that blow in from the western desert of Egypt.

When that cover was permanently cleared in a 1925-26 excavation by French architect Emile Baraize, the world found that the Sphinx's surface had been eaten away by erosion, although flecks of the original red color preferred by the ancient Egyptians could still be seen. In the years since, the monument has suffered a slow crumbling and flaking away of stone. The deterioration has increased year by year, with some experts blaming environmental factors such as air pollution and ground water seepage.

Hawass said the ground water problem was solved in the 1980s when a sewage

system was installed for the village nearest the Pyramids; air pollution does not seem a major problem. He said the most important factor in the monument's decay is the poor quality of the original limestone from which its core was carved.

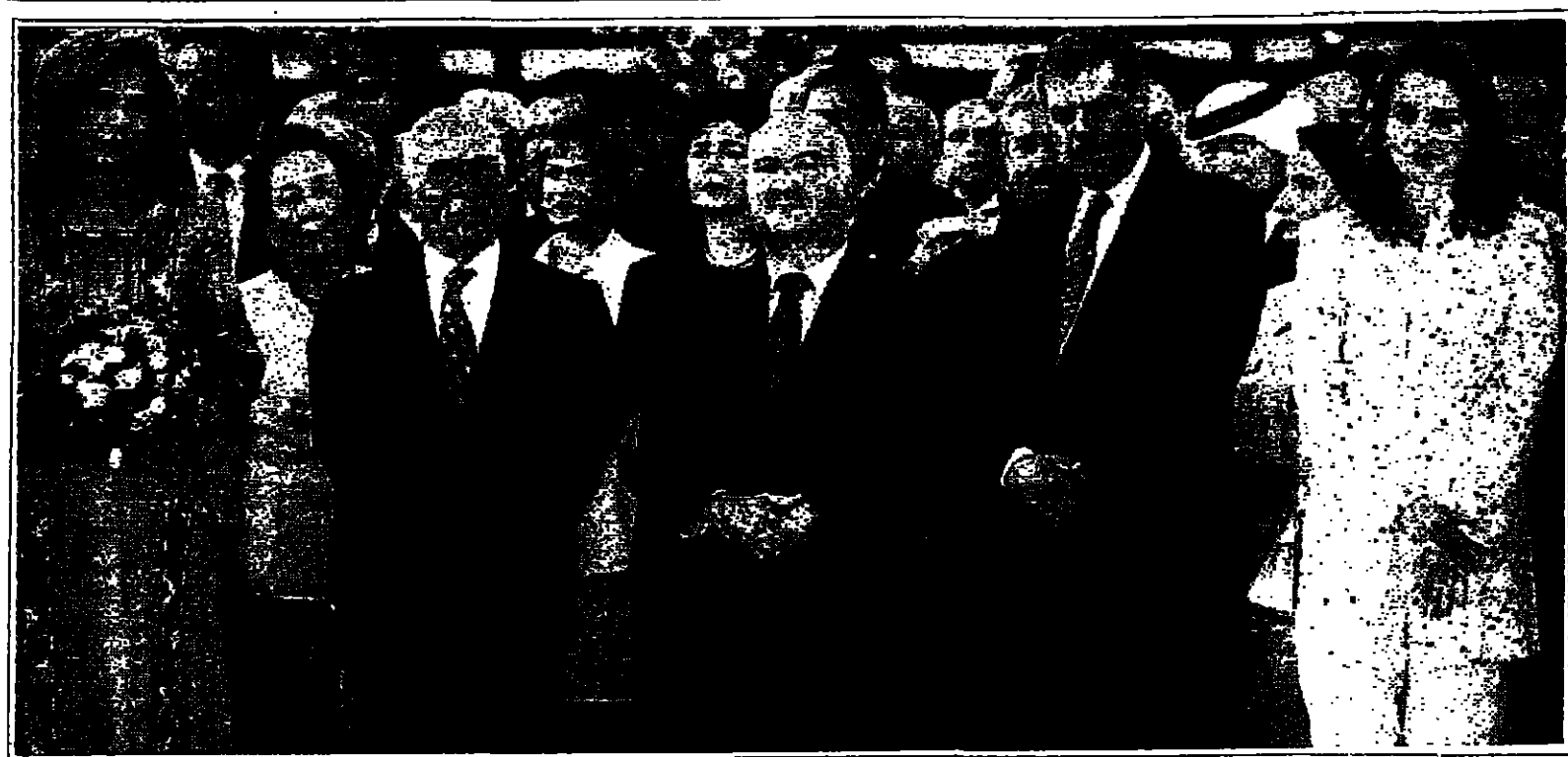
"We took the covering stones out and we found that the solid rock inside is nothing," he noted. "It is powder!"

The use of concrete to shore up the northern side of the Sphinx's flank in the 1980s damaged the inner limestone because moisture and salts were trapped there, accelerating the chemical process that turns the core limestone into dust, he said. The new limestone casing lets the original stone "breathe."

Recent scholarship has concluded that the Sphinx was an integral part of the funerary complex for Chephren, the Fourth Dynasty pharaoh who is also known as

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Jordan celebrated the 52nd anniversary of its Independence this week. A major celebration was held at Al Hussein Sports City which Her Majesty Queen Noor attended with members of the Royal Family. Also in attendance was His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Abdel Salaam Al Majali and other top Jordanian dignitaries. About 33500 people assembled in Sports City to view the anniversary celebrations.

## Dramatic shoot-out caps investigation of high-profile crimes

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antiques from Iraq. He did not pay them. They thought they were very precious," Rasheed said.

Mr Rasheed also said Mohammad Jughabin "was involved in both cases and some of his fingerprints were caught in both cases" [Al Rabieh and Shmeisani].

According to *Ad Dustour* daily, the lone survivor of the brutal attack, Ms Diotsios Lidaki, 37, a Greek cook and a close friend of George's who claimed just after the killings that Al Hejju had been lured to the villa, had apparently identified some of those involved in the murders among the recently arrested suspects.

On 8 April this year a triple murder took place in Shmeisani. Three prominent Jordanians, lawyer Hanna Nadeh, his son Suhail and psychiatrist Dr Awni George were shot dead at George's clinic over

the Eid holiday.

Rasheed said that psychiatrist Awni Saad also had financial dealings with the attackers.

There is evidence that money was involved between the doctor and the killers," he said.

Rasheed said that the group was also behind the 16 April murder of a taxi driver in Wadi Al Sir. The Minister said the driver was one of the suspects' companions.

Both crimes have been the source of considerable speculation. Rumors hitting the streets varied from notions that the crimes had political motivations to imagining the involvement of the international Mafia and drug traffickers.

According to sources close to the investigation, authorities will soon unveil the results of the completed investigation. ■

## For the Record

### King meets Egyptian foreign minister

AMMAN (Petra)—His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday received a message from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The message, which was conveyed to the King by Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa during a meeting at the Royal Court, explained the outcome of President Mubarak's talks with French President Jacques Chirac and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. It also dealt with the stalled peace process, particularly the Palestinian-Israeli track. Talks during the meeting stressed the importance of pursuing coordination and consultation between the two brotherly countries, particularly with regard to the obstacles impeding progress in peace talks and the need to support Palestinian brethren to restore their rights on their national soil.

Later the same day His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan also received the Egyptian Foreign Minister and discussed with him the latest developments in the peace process. Prince Hassan and Minister Musa emphasized the necessity for continued consultation between Arab countries and international parties concerning the peace process, to bring it out of the current impasse. During the meeting, which was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs Dr Jawad Anani, Prince Hassan affirmed the necessity to enhance Arab cooperation and integration in order to build an Arab economic identity capable of competing on equal footing with the rest of the world.

Musa arrived in Amman earlier on the day Tuesday. In a statement to reporters following the talks with King Hussein, Anani said the peace process in the region is passing through a crisis and requires close cooperation and coordination between all the parties concerned. The Egyptian Foreign Minister's visit is in this context, he added. Jordan appreciates Egypt's efforts to find a way out of the present impasse. Anani told reporters. In a press statement upon arrival, Musa said he was carrying a message to His Majesty King Hussein from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The message is part of an exchange between the two leaders and it is related to the King's message conveyed to President Mubarak by Anani.

The difficult situation in the region caused by Israel's intransigent policy and its rejection of all peace moves including the US initiative requires consultation amongst Arab countries and with world countries.

The Egyptian Minister declined to talk about the possibility of convening an Arab summit at present. "I prefer not to talk about this subject because, as Arabs, we know the subject of the summit is there in the Arab atmosphere and everyone is talking about it," he said.

Consultation and coordination are underway at the highest level among Arab countries regarding the intense situation, which currently does not bode well for the region. But still there some issues which need closer and deeper coordination, he said.

### Palestinian Affairs Department meeting

AMMAN (Petra)—Director General of the Palestinian Affairs Department Ibrahim Badran Saturday reiterated Jordan's adherence to peace in the Middle East as an "irretrievable" strategic option.

Badran made his remarks in the opening speech of the 57th meeting of the Committee of Educational Programs for Arab Students in the Israeli Occupied Territories. The meeting was held under the umbrella of the Arab League with the participation of representatives from countries hosting Palestinian refugees—Jordan, Syria and Lebanon—as well as representatives from the Arab League, the Arab Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organization and the Arab Broader Union.

Jordan has always been keen to seize every possible opportunity and to use its close relations based on frankness and credibility to crystallize an approach through which all parties can contribute to make of the peace concept a common ground for all, where they can work together to establish true and lasting peace, Badran said.

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## True love: Can't live without it, yet who can afford it?

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six years working and saving to marry one of his cousins after he lost hope of ever marrying his first love.

On the other hand "my cousin agreed to wait until I could afford to begin a new life in my own house," Ahmad added.

Statistics show that 55 percent of women between the age of 20-24 are still looking for a husband, while 27.61 percent of those between the age of 24-25 are still single. In the 25-29 age group the proportion of unmarried folk is 27.61 percent. The figures begin to drop from here on, with singles in the 30-34 age group comprising around 15 percent of their total number.

However, according to Mufeed Sirhan of the Al Afaf Charity Society, it is not just a financial question "since many rich men don't even think of marriage. The main issue is

actually the lack of understanding of the concept of marriage and family. This is why more and more people are turning away" from married life.

"We must increase public awareness of the importance and necessity of marriage and family in our Islamic society, to prevent the promotion of vice and an increase of evil," Sirhan said.

Sirhan continued that some people follow an expensive tradition for weddings—providing beautiful furniture for the new couple's house, buying clothes for the bride, after all, marriage supposedly being a one-time affair, many families refuse to give these costly formalities up.

A simple study carried out by Sirhan showed that a middle class marriage requires at least JD 7,000.

That means if a government employee receives JD 150 or 200 per month and he deter-

mines to save JD 100 of it each month, he will need seven years to accumulate the necessary sum.

Nevertheless, despite high unemployment and poverty, the age and salary at graduation and the amount of money it takes to get married, most men will be married by the age 30. Of course, this automatically affects the age of marriage for women.

Also, the ACS is helping to offset marriage costs. The organization granted 900 non-profit loans for those who intend to marry, haven't the means to afford it, and prefer not to wait.

And the society also provides another service.

"We receive applications from men and women who are looking for partners, and, in light of what they tell us, we try to match two candidates, according to their wishes and demands," Sarhan said.

"In the old days, each fam-

ily used to search out the suitable man for their daughter, but now it's left to the girl to find a husband," said Dr Sari Naser a sociologist at the University of Jordan.

"Other factors like education and economic position contribute considerably to increasing the age of marriage in Jordan," Dr Naser also emphasized the role emigration plays in keeping more women without husbands.

Naser said that when a man goes out of his country to work, he often discovers that he can choose and marry anyone he likes, if she agrees, without having the burden of obligations to the girl's family. This is especially true in western countries.

"Another reason, and I believe it is a very important one, is the fear of divorce. Many women prefer to remain spinsters than to risk becoming a divorced woman," Dr Naser said.

## Lenient attitude toward Iraq might prevail

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weapons and its long-range missiles. But an official UN "death certificate" for the nuclear weapons program would be one of those incentives that Russian, French and Chinese diplomats say should be offered Iraq.

France's ambassador to the United Nations, Alain Dejammet, described the Security Council's action this month as an attempt to ease the "frustration" in the Iraqi capital and elsewhere in the Arab world over the continuing sanctions, which have been in effect for most of this decade.

Although the United States supported the measure, the Americans were seen here as having little choice, given the overwhelming sentiment on the Security Council for some sort of put on the back for Baghdad. US negotiators did manage to place a strong set of conditions on Iraq's behavior.

The decision came after inspectors for the International

Atomic Energy Agency, a Vienna, Austria-based affiliate of the United Nations, reported no signs of ongoing nuclear weapons research in Iraq. Some independent arms experts have derided the agency's findings, noting that its inspectors failed to detect Iraq's prewar nuclear program in 1990.

There are other signs of a new UN attitude toward Baghdad.

Annan repeatedly has praised Iraqi cooperation with weapons inspectors since his talk with Saddam in February opened eight previously off-limits presidential compounds to inspection. After a recent meeting in Paris with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, Annan again declared himself "satisfied that ... Iraq has lived up to its obligations."

These optimistic readings overlook the fact that Iraq had months to remove any documents or other evidence from the presidential compounds before the first inspectors

arrived this spring. Annan also has ignored frequent suggestions by top Iraqi officials that they will again refuse inspectors' entry to the facilities.

The hazard of this soft-sell approach is evident to weapons inspectors.

"We fear there's a slippery slope here and Iraq is going to try to further weaken the inspection system and (that) eventually we're not going to be able to detect clandestine weapons programs," said David Albright, a former inspector who now heads the Institute for Science and International Security in Washington, DC.

Iraq officials, in fact, have maintained the pressure for more concessions. After the Security Council made the conciliatory gesture on nuclear weapons, Baghdad's ambassador to the world body, Nizar Hamdoun, sniffed that it was "too little, too late."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Israelis, Palestinians clash at Old City building site

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ing criticism from the opposition Labor Party and Palestinian leaders that his government is responsible for the 14-month deadlock.

Netanyahu said a wave of suicide bombings and violence in southern Lebanon had all but derailed the process before he came to power in June 1996. His government, he said, has worked since then to achieve a "genuine peace" with the Palestinians, one that would insure security for Israel.

But Shimon Peres, the former Labor Party prime minister and an architect of the Oslo accords, dismissed Netanyahu's arguments as "baseless stories."

"For two years, the negotiations have been prolonged without reason," Peres told Israel Radio, adding "it's possible to achieve peace."

Netanyahu has thus far rejected a US proposal to revive the peace process that calls for Israel to hand over an additional 13 percent of West Bank territory to the Palestinians in exchange for concrete steps to clamp down on militant Islamic groups and the adoption of a new Palestinian

national covenant, among other measures.

But he said Sunday that he expects a majority of his coalition government to ultimately support transferring more West Bank land to the Palestinians if Israel's security can be assured. The Cabinet on Sunday again discussed the proposed withdrawal but reached no decision, according to a statement.

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, meanwhile, urged the United States to go public with its initiative, a move that it is widely perceived would ratchet up the pressure on Israel to go along. "I am insisting that the American administration has to declare all of its initiative and what has happened with this initiative," he told reporters in the Gaza Strip. Arafat has already accepted the proposal.

But Netanyahu garnered support for his position from Sunday's unusual convergence on Jerusalem of the four visiting US congressional delegations, in particular from Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich, whose support of Israel is viewed by some political pundits as an attempt

to garner political support at home from both Jewish and right-wing Christian groups, both of whom are inevitably pro-Israel.

Gingrich has in the past been openly critical of President Clinton's attempts to set deadlines for progress in the peace process, echoing Netanyahu's views that Israel alone must decide its security needs without interference—even from its closest ally, the United States.

"The reality is that true peace has to be based on true security," he said as Netanyahu sat beside him on the dais at a Jerusalem news conference. "We're here to learn, we're here to help, we're here to help help a peace process in which Israel defines its own security needs."

The congressional visit coincided with mass celebrations marking the anniversary of Israel's capture of the eastern sector of Jerusalem in the 1967 Six Day War.

The issue of Jerusalem is one of the most explosive on the Israeli-Palestinian agenda. Israel claims all of the city as its capital and says it will never again be divided. The Palestinians, in turn, claim the eastern sector as the capital of the independent state they hope to establish one day.

The United States and most other nations have never recognized Israel's 1967 annexation of east Jerusalem and have kept their embassies in Tel Aviv, pending the outcome of final negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians on the city's status.

Gingrich—along with a majority of Congress—supports moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem now, but he buckled last week to White House pressure to cancel a planned visit to the site of the future embassy here, an event that angry Palestinians had warned would be "playing with fire."

Gingrich's remarks have struck some in the Clinton administration as foreign policy freelancing. "I think it's unfortunate that the speaker, in a range of matters related to foreign policy, has injected a high degree of partisanship into his comments," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said.

He and the State Department also took aim at a remark by Gingrich in Washington earlier this month that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was behaving as if she were "the agent for the Palestinians" in the peace talks. McCurry said that Gingrich's "suggestion that the secretary of state is loyal to anyone but the people of the United States of America is offensive—highly offensive."

Mindful in this congressional election year of American Jewish financial support as well as the powerful Jewish lobby in both the House and Senate, many US legislators have gone out of their way to offer, at least until after the November elections, praise and pledges of unwavering support for Israel. None, however, has outdone Gingrich.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Shbeilat says he'll wait for appeal

SPECULATIONS on just when Leith Shbeilat will leave prison is continuing. Last week Shbeilat released a special Royal Pardon, saying that the decision was unconstitutional because his case was still in the appeal courts. However Shbeilat did say that he would accept the release if all other prisoners that were included in a 1996 amnesty were also released.

Shbeilat, 56, the government's No. 1 opponent as the weekly press sensationally describes him, was sentenced by the State Security Court to nine-months in jail this month for inciting pro-Iraq riots in the southern town of Ma'an last February.

His Majesty King Hussein ordered Shbeilat's release during an unannounced visit to the leaders of the Professional Associations last week to hear their grievances.

"The Shbeilat case is over, with his colleagues as guarantors for him," the King told

reporters following the meeting with the professional associations' presidents.

However, Shbeilat said in the letter "I did not ask anyone to vie for me to stop my national activity." He added, "I never, in the past or now, wanted any pardon for alleged crimes that I have not confessed to committing."

In his letter to the warden of his prison, which later was released by the official Jordan News Agency, Petra, last Wednesday, Shbeilat expressed surprise in reading about his pardon.

"Since my case is still being examined by the judiciary which I expect will declare my innocence of the fabricated charges, so the decision I read in the papers has no constitutional means for implementation...this is also an interference in the judicial system which has not yet pronounced a final verdict," Shbeilat wrote.

But, he added, since the pardon has already happened, "I will refrain from publicizing the news of my rejection of the Royal pardon on one condition, which is the implementation of a previous Royal Decree issued November 12, 1996 to pardon all who served reasonable time in jail, and those who do not pose a security threat, as in the Royal letter sent to [former prime minister Abdel Karim]

Kabariti. The content of the letter was not executed."

His pardon has become complicated because the verdict by the State Security Court is not final, since it is contestable in the Court of Cassation.

Acting Information Minister Nasser Lawzi said last Thursday that the court's verdict was not final, and that if Shbeilat's lawyers decide not to appeal, the verdict will be final and Shbeilat will be subject to the King's pardon. But if the lawyers decide to appeal, then the Court of Cassation can either endorse the State Security Court's verdict or acquit him.

Shbeilat, an outspoken opponent of the government, was also pardoned by King Hussein in 1992 and 1996. He was sentenced to death in 1992 for treason but had his sentence commuted to a jail term. He was jailed again for slandering the Monarch and released in 1996.

Shbeilat, who is also former president of the Jordan Engineers Association, was arrested on 20 February after delivering a sermon at Ma'an's main mosque. Hours later, a pro-Iraqi protest swept the city, leaving one Jordanian dead and over 25 others injured. The government, which imposed a six-day curfew on Ma'an, blamed Shbeilat for inciting the unrest. ■

## Egypt unveils new improved Sphinx

Continued from page 1

Khafra and whose pyramid is the second largest of the three great pyramids of Giza. The Sphinx, a lion's body that is 66 feet tall and 242 feet long topped with the head of a man, was meant to be a "manifestation of Khafra reborn as the sun god," archeologists Vivian Davies and Renee Friedman have written.

It was carved from layers of 50-million-year-old limestone that vary dramatically in quality. The head and face, modeled on Chephren himself, are in good shape because the

stone there is the strongest. But the torso and chest are badly worn. To slow the deterioration, restorers have coated threatened areas with a mortar made of sand, lime and water, the same materials used by the ancients.

To replace the stone casing on the sides of the Sphinx, 12,478 new limestone blocks were hewn from a quarry in Helwan a few miles up the Nile. The stone was chosen to match the original as closely as possible. ■

LA Times-Washington Post

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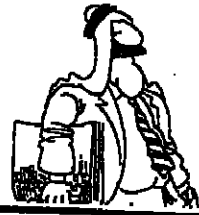
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## JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional  
report on Jordanian  
news and views edited  
by Marwan Al Asmar

## Minister denies

The government has denied reports that it has refused to allow Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin to enter the country. Deputy Prime Minister for Services and Minister of Information Abdullah Nsour said that the government has been informed about the visit only before 24 hours. "It is a very short period of time to inform the government about such a visit," Nsour said. He pointed out that His Majesty King Hussein exerted intensive efforts to release Sheikh Yassin from Israeli prisons, and used the assassination attempt against Khaled Meshal to achieve this goal. "Sheikh Yassin enjoys Jordan's respect and appreciation," the Minister stressed. Meanwhile the Deputy Prime Minister for Service Affairs denied remarks attributed to Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of Foreign Affairs Jawad Anani by Israeli radio, as saying that His Majesty King Hussein has suspended contacts with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Speaking to reporters following a cabinet session, Nsour said that Dr Anani pointed out that, due to the current Israeli intransigence and Benjamin Netanyahu's rejection to continue the peace march, "we in Jordan do not want to reach the stage of suspending contacts between both sides." Dr Nsour pointed out that the Israeli prime minister promised His Majesty King Hussein, during their recent meeting in Elat, that he will soon provide the King with new news, but nothing has changed so far. The stage the peace process has reached foretells a grave and unknown future, the Minister said.

## Next PM

Speaker of the Upper House Senator Zeid Al Rifai could be the next prime minister. According to press speculation Al Rifai, who is a former prime minister, would head the next government in a major cabinet reshuffle. It is thought that what triggered such speculation was the recent meeting of His Majesty King Hussein with the leaders of the Professional Associations.

## Fighting corruption

The Anti-Corruption Directorate is at present investigating allegations of embezzlement and misconduct in telephone bills that are issued by Telecommunication Co. It is understood that people from outside of the organization as well as a number of employees have been involved in the activity.

## Charity societies

According to statistics of the Ministry of Social Development there are at least 700 registered charity societies in the Kingdom. This is considered by some to be too high a figure for Jordan, considering the size of the population. Also, in the last five months 11 more charities have been established, and 36 more are waiting for registration by the Ministry. However, in the past five months also, the registrations of nine societies have also been withdrawn by the Ministry.

## Cancer

More people in Jordan contracted cancer than ever before. According to Ministry of Health sources the number of cancer cases in 1997 was 3700—400 more than in 1996.

## Journalism Workshop

A one day workshop entitled "Journalism and Democracy in Jordan: For a Democratic Publications Law" is being held this Saturday 30 May at the Professional Association Complex. The conference is being jointly organized by the National Society for Freedom and Democracy, Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Center and Jordan Engineers Association. According to the organizers the reason for holding the workshop is to set the groundwork for a dialogue between the public and the government, especially with respect to the upcoming press and publications draft law, which is to be presented to this summer's extraordinary session of the Lower House of Parliament. Many prominent personalities will take part in the workshop. These include Taher Al Masri, Ibrahim Izzaldin, Mahmood Al Sherif, and many others.

## Arab associations stress consolidation, integration

AMMAN (Star)—Arab unions and professional associations have to find a way out of the state of frustration they are going through, in order to launch a new era of consolidation and integrity.

This idea was highlighted by participants in the seminar organized by the Jordanian Doctors' Association at the Professional Associations Complex. The seminar stressed the need to establish joint Arab action for professional unions, which have been in existence for more than 50 years.

Dr Mohammad Al Rawi, president of the Medical Association in Qatar, stressed the importance of cooperation and coordination among professional associations in the Arab World.

"What is needed is to unify Arab objectives and put forward defined schemes to achieve these goals," Dr Al Rawi says. And hence it has become imperative for Arab countries to cooperate, through professional associations, especially in the area of exchanging expertise and skills covering education, medical treatment and other specializations.

Jordan Lawyers Association President Hussein Mjalli says with so many skilled people in the region, there is a huge potential in the Arab world. These professional cadres long to establish one single professional body.

Mjalli points out that the

professionals have identical stances in the Arab nation and adopt a clear position regarding Arab issues and reject any attempt to normalize with Israel.

"Arab unity is the only weapon with which Arabs can face the Zionist movement," he adds.

For his part, Husni Abu Ghaida, president of the Jordan Engineers Association, highlighted the achievements of the Arab Engineers Union, which has an active and qualified membership, adding that the Union is one of the pillars affecting engineering associations both on the regional and international levels.

Also participating in the seminar was Dr Hassan Khreis, secretary general of the Arab Doctors Union, who tackled the difficulties that left a negative impact on the achievements of Arab professional associations for decades.

Dr Khreis elaborates that regardless of this, these bodies at least maintain by their existence an evidence of materializing the concept of the Arab Union.

The associations have been the target of destructive campaigns, in which they were accused of holding certain political stances, Dr Khreis says. He admits that the chronicle of Arab professional associations has suffered from some negative practices, but nonetheless, they have also experienced great accomplishment.



### Prince Hassan visits Wihdat

AMMAN (Star)—His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Sunday made an unexpected visit to Wihdat refugee camp and was accorded an enthusiastic welcome by the camp residents, who thronged the streets to greet him.

Prince Hassan, who toured parts of the camp, visited one of the homes to drink coffee and listen to residents' requests and the status of their living conditions.

The visit comes a few days before the start of a conference in Amman for the donor nations which finance the operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

The conference, which is held today, Thursday, 28 May, will emphasize the need for the agency to pursue its services until a final and just solution for the refugees' problems has been found.



## Jordanian inventors need just an extra little push

By Ilham Sadeq  
Star Staff Writer

THE DEVELOPMENT of any country is measured by the standard of technology and scientific progress. This is why the focus over the last few years has been concentrated on enhancing scientific research and giving priority for national support to build a wide base for the sciences and technology.

As many suggest, in the first decade of the next millennium the majority of Jordan's population will be between the ages of 25 and 27. And therefore one essential question is posed: Are we sufficiently preparing them to take advantage of the technological potential that will become increasingly to them available.

There are many in the Kingdom with innovative ideas and discoveries—let's call them inventors—who are finding it difficult to get the support they need to continue their work. Some of these researchers have had to slow down, or sometimes temporarily cease conducting further tests related to improvements within their respective fields. This is because of shortage in financial resources and the necessary equipment and facilities.

While some inventors are involved in complex technological developments and extraordinary creative enterprises that need development and marketing, not all ideas that need a helpful push are completely new and innovative; some involve relatively simple concepts that just need improvement.

Either way, those with new ideas and innovations in technical fields often have a long journey before their dreams and ambitions are realized.

Omar Nassir Tahat, from the National Resources Authority, discovered an alloy that consists of aluminium and manganese.

"My invention was registered at the Ministry of Industry and Trade in 1993. The potential of using alloy for industrial purposes is numerous," he says.

The costs of the material is cheap, as manganese exists naturally as a raw material in large quantities and its extraction is relatively inexpensive.

"The alloy can be used as an added material in the production of aluminium and manganese

for casting a wrought (less than 30 percent) manganese. It can also be utilized as an added material in producing aluminium-bronze alloys that contain between 1 percent and 1.5 percent manganese or higher (up to 15 percent)."

Tahat continues. Among other utilizations of the alloy are the removal of oxygen from molten steel in all its different types as well as removing the oxygen from molten copper and its alloys.

Tahat says that he worked on developing and refining the alloy for three years, and that it took only six months to complete the official registration of his discovery. He appreciated the cooperation he received from the Royal Scientific Society, which helped him in analyzing a sample of the alloy at its microscopic electronic analysis facility.

He also received assistance from the Science and Technology Club, the National Resources Authority and professors from various departments in the University of Jordan.

Yet for all the aid he has received, Tahat still faces two most difficult problems. The first—one all-too-common to inventors in many developing countries—is the lack of intellectual property rights, which would protect his discovery from those who would attempt to illegally "borrow" it.

The other is the marketing problem. "I looked into promoting my invention internationally, but the cost would be about \$30,000, which of course is out of my reach," he says.

Despite the many letters of recommendation from ministries and other parties concerned with enhancing scientific research, Tahat has been unable to market his discovery, and, in addition has found it difficult to further develop ideas he has for the extraction and treatment of raw mineral resources.

He even seems reluctant to speak about these, pointing out that the media don't give these issues the careful attention they deserve.

"Media make people well-known," he notes, adding that it was time they focused on Jordanian innovators and their inventions in an effort to make their skills and achievements better known, as well as to give



(From left) Abu Abed, Tahat and Al Adayleh

hope and encouragement to future generations of local inventors.

Another "man full of ideas" is Yazid Al Adayleh, a student at Saeed Bin Al Mubayyah school, scientific branch.

He has come up with a new application for the photocell—as the crucial element of a system designed to help conserve water. "It is called the electronic wash basin," and it is intended to limit household water consumption," says Adayleh. When the housewife puts her hands inside the basin, they interrupt a light source trained on the cell, which then activates a switch that turns on a water pump to let water flow, he explains.

"This basin doesn't need taps, it can be easily connected to the water tank, and it is also very cheap—only about JD14, whereas the imported version of a similar device is sold for around JD400."

What is interesting in Al Adayleh's invention is that it began as a challenge from his physics teacher, who bet the student that he could not find a way to apply his idea successfully.

The teacher lost the bet. In addition, this brilliant student has developed a device that helps to determine whether a bank note is real or counterfeit.

The device is currently being examined for possible applications at the Anti-Corruption Directorate.

Another student who has also come up with creative ideas is Abdullah Fattah Abu Abed,

from Abu Hurairah Secondary School, scientific branch.

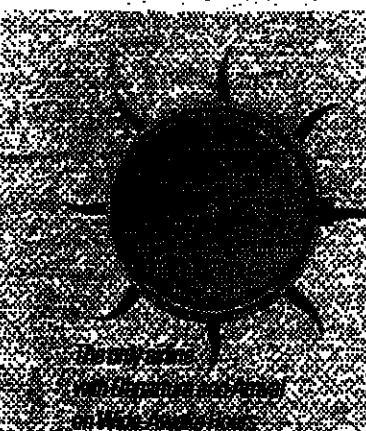
He has developed an instrument that can measure the level of liquid in tanks on pools. "It's a very simple device that is linked with the water tank on the roof of a house with cables. It is equipped with a series of lights that indicate the level of water in the tank without having to go up to the roof and look," Abu Abed says.

The energy used in going up and down the stairs to check the water level isn't the only thing you save—the device is inexpensive, costing less than JD 1.5. Two batteries are enough to provide the power to run the instrument for upwards of 10 years.

In addition, the student has developed a monitor that can tell you when to add water in the process of mixing cement.

Again, equipped with lights, this simple device can help contractors determine whether their cement is properly made or not. Its cost is no more than JD 2.5. For his water tank device, Abu Abed was awarded by the Science and Technology Club and the invention was applauded by the Ministry of Education.

In light of these examples, there are, needless to say, countless brilliant and creative students and inventors whose efforts should be far better known, and who also deserve appropriate financial backing as well as production and marketing help in order to effectively realize their ideas, which would ultimately be to the benefit of all.



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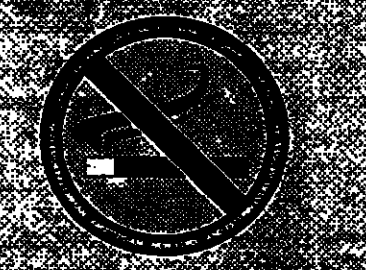
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## Our Say...

### Restoring public confidence

THE SUCCESSFUL security raid, supervised by HRH Prince Abdallah, in Sehab this week, which resulted in the capture of the killers who were behind a series of gruesome murders that appalled Jordanians, deserves our praise. The intelligence gathering operation and the professional investigative work carried out by the authorities has brought to an end one of the bloodiest episodes in the country's criminal annals. Jordanians can now rest assured that those who attempted to tamper with the country's security and the well-being of citizens are either dead or behind bars. The operation has restored confidence in the Kingdom's public security apparatus and its ability to confront crimes that are alien to our culture and to the nature of Jordanians. We have always expressed pride in our country as being an oasis of stability and security. In fact, in a region afflicted by political, social and economic set-backs, Jordan has always distinguished itself as being a haven for law-abiding citizens and visitors.

The recent murders were definitely an aberration; an exception to the rule. It is important that all details behind the cowardly murders, which claimed a number of innocent victims, be made public. Those responsible must face a just punishment under the law so that this case can be closed and its painful memory put to rest. By solving the case quickly, the authorities have boosted public morale and given Jordanians the opportunity to move beyond the anxiety and confusion that swept through the country over the past few weeks. But the authorities should also study the reasons and motives behind the recent rise in crime rates. While we have absolute confidence in the ability of Public Security organs to maintain law and order, experts must look into the causes behind the rise in the number of violent crimes in the country.

Jordan is a country of young people, the majority of whom are hardworking, educated and responsible. But the effects of poverty, unemployment, and drug abuse, along with other problems, must be studied objectively in order to reach scientific conclusions about their causes and come out with workable options and solutions. In fact, Jordan's youth hold the nation's promise for a better tomorrow and as such deserve the best possible attention from the authorities. Our deputies are also asked to keep Jordan's young in their minds as they debate legislation, such as fire-arm control, and development projects. The same goes for public and private companies and institutions which have a responsibility towards society.

This is indeed a challenge for the authorities and for the whole society, but it is one worth taking if we are to protect our country and youth from the perils of crime and social disorders. ■

## Letters to the Editor

### Feels just like home

To The Editor,  
I am writing to commend the entire Star staff for doing an outstanding job, tackling on a weekly basis domestic, national, and international issues in the most eloquent fashion. In particular, I would like to single out Ms Awadat. I enjoy so much reading her article every Thursday. It makes me feel like I am still living in Jordan despite the fact that I am thousands of miles away.

Her coverage of diversified domestic and social issues represents an unprecedented phenomenon, not found even in the two or three major daily Jordanian publications. Ms Awadat ought to be recognized for her distinguished and exemplary articles.

I do not know how many other reading fans Ms Awadat has! I am certainly one of them. I would not trade reading her weekly article for anything. And when I think that she is about to run out of interesting issues she comes up with yet another spectacular article, like the one covering divorce and its causes in the May 15 issue.

Hatem Abumtneh  
Chicago, Illinois, USA

### Thanks for objectivity, research

To The Editor,  
I would like to congratulate Ms Mango on her excellent article concerning young Jordanians' ideas about love before marriage! The article stands out because she was objective, yet let her subjects have free reign in expressing their true feelings. She has addressed an issue that is often avoided, and has clearly done much research on the topic.

I am a student of Arabic and French in London, and I spent four months in Jordan in the summer of 1996. Jordan is a wonderful country and I hope to return there soon! Living with a Jordanian family helped me to understand the values which have helped shape Arab societies.

I was surprised when I read what the young people had to say—and even more surprised to learn all were from different backgrounds! I knew that wealthier Jordanians had slightly more "liberal" codes of behavior, but it seems that a great change is sweeping the entire social spectrum.

Thank you again for publishing a very enlightening article.

Greg Russell  
London, England

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# Demand for OPEC 'crude' at low ebb Politics, oil, cash flow and the need to diversify

By Christian Dournit

CURRENT OIL prices in real economic terms are lower than they have ever been during this century. The prices began to fall after OPEC's ministerial conference in Jakarta in late November 1997 raised the combined production ceiling from 25 million barrels per day (b/d) to 27.5 million b/d. The decision was imposed by Saudi Arabia, which complained that OPEC members who were cheating on their quotas would no longer benefit from the rise in world demand in recent years. The Saudis miscalculated. The Asian economic crisis, which no one had expected, caused Asian demand for oil to fall. The winter in the northern hemisphere, meanwhile, was unusually mild and western markets could not absorb surplus oil. The rise in Iraqi oil exports added pressure to oil prices and caused Middle East sour crudes (oil with high sulphur content) to fall below \$11 a barrel. In the second half of March prices were drifting lower and Gulf exports feared that sour crudes could drop below \$8 a barrel.

The over-riding message of what is happening to oil prices today is that it can help countries in recession. Cheap oil today is lowering the pain in Asia and helping the OECD countries to fund the Asian measures towards economic recovery. Cheap oil will help prevent or delay recession in the Anglo-Saxon economies. The message is also that world demand for oil will rise faster than expected after Asia's economic recovery. Only when Asian demand has risen to exceed Middle Eastern supply capabilities will prices rise.

Iran and Saudi Arabia can ill afford sustained low oil prices. Both need to maximize their oil export revenues. Iran, because its economy is facing problems, from a declining rial to inflation and low non-oil exports; and Saudi Arabia because its economy has just begun to recover in 1996 and 1997 from the impact of bearing the largest share of the cost of the operations of Desert Shield and Desert Storm which led to the

expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait. Both countries will have to face some harsh realities in the short term. Tehran now expects a 30 percent cut in revenues for the fiscal year which began on 21 March 1998 based on a \$12 barrel. For their part, Saudi planners, who had started to relax spending in the current budget after two successive years of austerity will face similar problems. It has been estimated

the providers themselves were in poor financial shape or because they were punished for sympathizing with Saddam Hussein during the Gulf crisis.

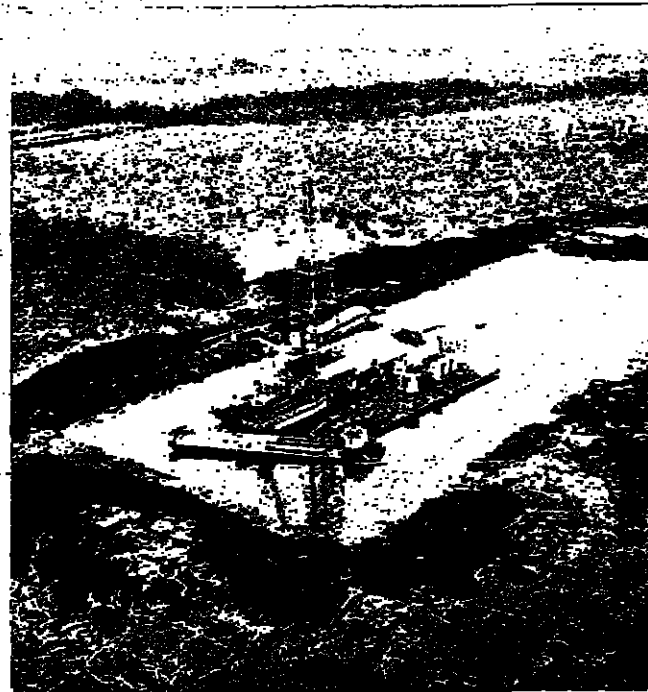
One of the key challenges of globalization for the Middle East is to overcome this oil curse. It is in this context that the IMF and the World Bank have stepped up activities in the region in a big way. They are providing several countries,

surprised Egypt and which continues in Algeria, to the more subtle and invisible opposition activity in Saudi Arabia. But in either case, they form a kind of pressure which the regimes cannot overlook. These groups themselves seem globalized, with complex international communications networks.

Political systems in the region remain slow to match the rapid pace of globalization. Stability in Middle Eastern countries usually depends on a single figure rather than on regional economic determinants. This situation is not likely to change in the foreseeable future. For the members of OPEC the critical question in the next decade will be the order of succession in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states. But aside from this there is the ever present danger of a sudden coup.

For Middle Eastern producers, one of the new realities to be addressed in the coming decades is the emergence of new competitors from Central Asia in the global oil and gas trade. All the major energy consumers are looking at the countries in that region as future sources of oil and gas, with some of them being promoted as the "new Saudi Arabia" or the "next Kuwait". The crude-long OPEC members are watching carefully as development projects in these countries are being signed and pipeline ventures are proposed to export the oil and gas. (See the Struggle for the Caspian, The Star 23 April 1998). The level of exports from the region in the future is bound to have an impact on the role OPEC can play on the global scene. But the main problem facing the Caspian Basin is that there is no efficient way to get the oil and gas to consumer markets except through lengthy pipelines, which must transit one or more countries to get to an export terminal on the open sea. There are also some legal issues affecting the Caspian Sea that are yet to be resolved. ■

Christian Dournit is an energy consultant based in Amman. He is a regular speaker at energy conferences.



that, if oil prices remain at around \$14 a barrel this year, the Saudi budget deficit could reach \$10.6 billion instead of the projected \$4.8 billion.

Cheap oil, while good for the Asian recovery, is bad for long-term crude members in the short term. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that economies of oil-rich countries in the Middle East have become heavily dependent on crude exports, hence the "oil curse". Many Arab countries who had no oil resources had become dependent on aid provided by the oil producers. Economic repercussions caused by this curse have been felt through the 1990s, while the oil-rich group had their reserve funds depleted during the Gulf crisis. The oil-poor group got no aid because

including OPEC members like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, with guidance aimed at making the structural adjustments required to get their economies diversified and less vulnerable to oil price fluctuations. The difficulty is that even limited reforms are painful for people on the Arab side of the Gulf who have known no austerity, having enjoyed decades of high spending. But the pressure is becoming stronger, both from the IMF and the World Bank as well as the realities imposed by the global market.

As the economic difficulties have increased, Islamic oriented groups opposed to the existing regimes have appeared in the Arab world. The degree of opposition can vary from the extreme brutality that recently

## Sanctions used ineffectively

# Clinton policy major reason for south Asian nuclear race

By Curt Weldon

ESCALATING TENSIONS between India and Pakistan should come as no surprise to the Clinton administration. Since the president took office, there have been dozens of reported transfers of sensitive military technology by Russia and China—in direct violation of numerous international arms control agreements—to a host of nations, including Pakistan and India.

Yet the Clinton administration has repeatedly chosen to turn a blind eye to this proliferation of missile, chemical, biological and nuclear technology, consistently refusing to impose sanctions on violators. And in those handfuls of instances where sanctions were imposed, they usually were either quickly waived by the administration or allowed to expire. Rather than condemn India for current tensions, the blame for the political powder keg that has emerged in Asia should be laid squarely at the feet of President Clinton. It is his administration's inaction and refusal to enforce arms control agreements that have allowed the fuse to grow so short.

In November 1992, the United States learned that China had transferred M-11 missiles to Pakistan. The Bush administration imposed sanctions for this violation, but Clinton waived them a little more than 14 months later. Clearly, the sanctions did not have the desired effect. Reports during the first half of 1995 indicated that M-11 missiles, additional M-11 missile parts, as well as 5,000 ring magnets for Pakistani nuclear enrichment programs were transferred from China. Despite these clear violations, no sanctions were imposed. And it gets worse.

Not to be outdone by its sworn foe, India aggressively pursued similar technologies and obtained them, illicitly, from Russia. From 1991 to 1995, Russian entities transferred cryogenic liquid oxygen, hydrogen rocket engines and technology to India. While

sanctions were imposed by President Bush in May 1992, the Clinton administration allowed them to expire after only two years. And in June 1993, evidence surfaced that additional Russian enterprises were involved in missile technology transfers to India. The administration imposed sanctions in June 1993, and then promptly waived them.

Meanwhile, Pakistan continued to aggressively pursue technology transfers from China. In August 1996, the capability to manufacture M-11 missile or missile components was transferred from China to Pakistan. No sanctions. In November 1996, a special industrial furnace and high-tech diagnostic equipment were transferred from China to an unprotected Pakistani nuclear facility. No sanctions. Also during 1996, the director of the CIA issued a report stating that China had provided a "tremendous variety" of technology and assistance for Pakistan's ballistic missile program and was the principal supplier of

nuclear equipment for Pakistan's program. Again, the Clinton administration refused to impose sanctions.

Finally, in recent months we have learned that China may have been responsible for the transfer of technology for Pakistan's Ghauri medium-range ballistic missile. Flight tested on April 6, 1998, the Ghauri missile has been widely blamed as the impetus for India's decision to detonate five nuclear weapons in tests earlier this month. Again, no sanctions were imposed on China.

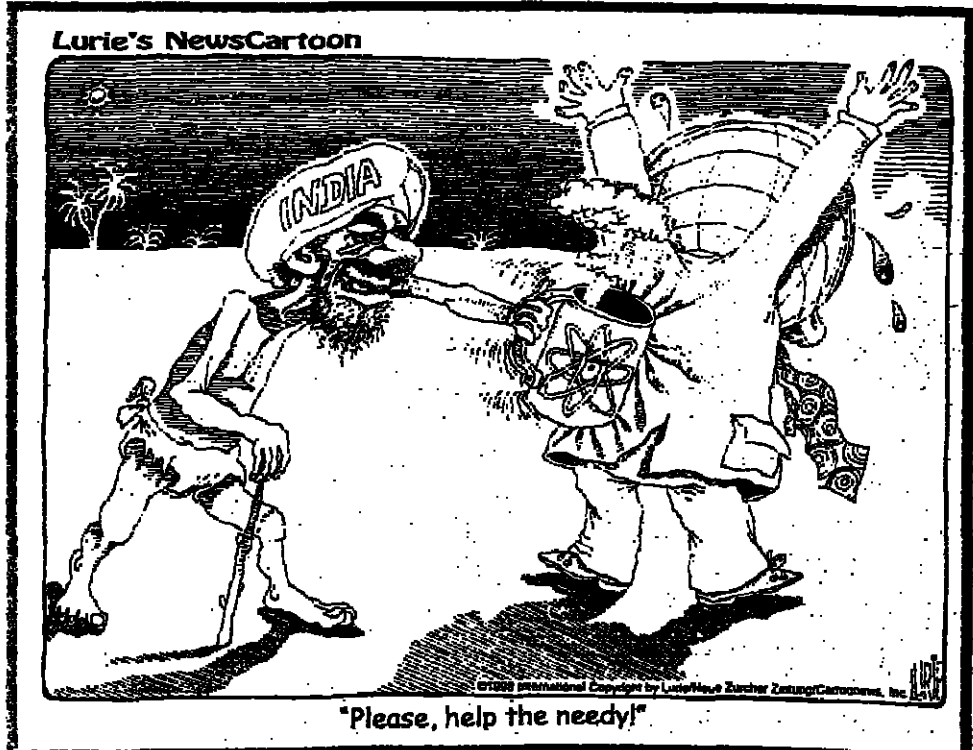
Retracing the history of these instances of proliferation, it is obvious that Pakistan and India have been locked in an arms race since the beginning of the decade. And the race has been given repeated jump-starts by China and Russia, a clear violation of a number of arms control agreements. Yet rather than enforce these arms control agreements, the Clinton administration has repeatedly acquiesced, fearing that the imposition of sanctions could either strain relations with China and

Russia or potentially hurt US commercial interests in those countries.

Now the Clinton administration has announced a get-tough policy, threatening to impose sanctions on India for testing its nuclear weapons. But what about Russia and China, the two nations that violated international arms agreements? Shouldn't they also be subject to US sanctions for their role in this crisis? Sadly, the Clinton administration is likely to ignore the proliferators and impose sanctions solely on India. In the meantime, China and Russia will continue their proliferation of missile and nuclear technology to other nations. ■

Representative Curt Weldon, a Republican from Pennsylvania, USA, is chairman of the US House of Representatives' National Security Committee's Military Research and Development Subcommittee.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



## Iranian prospects

IT IS very interesting to note the press reports about recent demonstrations in Tehran supporting president Khatami and his policies, as well as the emerging nucleus of a new political party under the leadership of the Mayor of Tehran, who was arrested and released recently.

One is rather circumspect using terms like *Perestroika*, but it seems that Iran is on the move towards changes that may raise an eyebrow of more conservative elements in the upper echelons of the Iranian hierarchy.

The cautious advent of some sort of political pluralism seems imminent, but again, it will have to be, for the time being, in the context of the principles of Iran's Islamic Revolution. There is real popular support for some kind of political diversity. But there are also great suspicions emerging from the side of the "Pasdaran"—the revolutionary guards.

The conventional guardians of the Republic of Imam Khomeini are now facing the unconventional guardians of the Republic of Imam Khatami. Up till now both sides have been very careful not to overstep their respective mandates and parameters, and are likely to continue doing so till a proper *modus vivendi* emerges, with the possibility of real cooperation between them.

Of course, the grounds for change have already been laid, with the various overtures made by president Khatami towards the west, in particular the US, and the easing of some of the social and cultural laws governing the country.

Though not in a particularly direct manner, the west has shown willingness to enter into dialogue with Iran, with the ultimate aim of restoring diplomatic relations between Tehran and the Islamic countries. The Americans for their part have returned the favor by lifting punitive threats against companies investing in Iranian oil.

With such signals of indirect support, President Khatami has actually strengthened his hand against the more skeptical anti-western elements in Iran's governing body, and seems to be set on rejuvenating the often hapazard dialogue with the western world. And his good will is not limited to the west alone, but extends equally toward his neighbors in the Arab World.

There are currently some attempts at building communication channels with Iraq. More distinctly, relations with Saudi Arabia are improving, and with the United Arab Emirates there is at least the goodwill to attempt to negotiate a solution over the occupied islands in the Gulf.

Overall, the picture is optimistic. The new Iranian approach to world and regional relations is likely to alter the balance of the west's "dual containment" policy now in place against Iraq and Iran—a shift that could very well be for the good.

Still, much is yet to be resolved. It is said: "The devil is in the detail." There are many details to solve before much can change with respect to relations with the west.

Under the current British presidency of the EU the fact of Imam Khomeini's *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie remains a sticking point. It would be ironic if it was Britain that takes the initiative in building good relations with Iran, while the *fatwa* still stands against one of its citizens. Perhaps some solution can be found. If the *fatwa* cannot be revoked, then perhaps the incentive to execute it can be eliminated.

Other issues, such as Iran's possible possession of weapons of mass destruction, alleged Iranian support for perceived terrorism, and Iran's objection to the Middle East peace and the on-going negotiations with Israel, remain to be solved.

Still, the easing of relations with Iran may at last bring out these issues as subjects for constructive dialogue, rather than remaining causes of international tension. ■



## Business scene

■ Hoping to expand its network to cover all parts of the Kingdom, the Jordan Mobile Telephone Service (JMTS) has signed a \$26.4 million syndicated loan pact with a group of Jordanian banks. The pact is led by the Housing Bank, with the participation of Jordan-Kuwait Bank, Citibank, Grindleys, Export and Finance Bank, the Arab Banking Corporation (ABC), Jordan Investment and Finance Bank, the Arab-Jordanian Investment Bank, Philadelphia Bank, the British Bank and the Union Savings and Investment Bank.

It is reported that the extended loan will finance the fourth phase of the expansion of the scale of mobile telephone service, intended to cover all parts of the country. The agreement is a fine example of the cooperation of the private sector in carrying out infrastructure projects, in addition to reflecting the role of the banking sector in supporting and financing developing enterprises in the Kingdom. So far, Fastlink is the only company authorized to introduce and expand mobile telephone service in the Kingdom, and it has the reputation of being efficient in executing large projects that require extensive investment.

■ Arab Pharmaceuticals Co recorded a net profit of JD 6.7 million in 1997, generating a sharp rise of 97.4% compared with 1996. Its assets, which increased by 4.8% over 1996, were JD 44.63 million at the end of 1997. Revenues totalled JD 49,000, rising by 58.9% and net sales reached JD 30.41 million, showing a leap of 23.4% compared with 1996. The company's stock market value was JD 37.44 million by the end of 1997 against JD 31.30 million at the end of 1996.

■ Zaqra Investment (Holding) Co. has consolidated movements of nearly JD 5.24 million during 1997, while its pretax profits were JD 731,500. Its budget was about JD 111 million at the end of last year, marking a rise of 50% over 1996. The company's shareholders' rights went up by 29.4% to reach JD 57.9 million. Zaqra Investment is currently busy carrying out touristic and investment projects estimated at JD 45.2 million. It succeeded recently in raising its capital from JD 40 million to JD 50 million.

## Foreign Exchange

Wednesday, 27 MAY

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US\$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
SP\$	0.4801	0.4825
FRF	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEL	0.3667	0.3685
LIT (100)	0.0419	0.0421

Turkish Days in Amman  
A turning point for regional trade

TRADE EXHIBITIONS are one of the most practical and effective ways of improving regional trade and bilateral relations. This was the main theme of the Turkish Export Goods Exhibition held in Amman at the International Motor Show Exhibition Center between 19-22 of May.

"Turkish Days in Jordan" constituted one of Turkey's vehicles for promoting its trade and industries to regional markets. Under the slogan "New Markets, New Horizons," the expo concentrated on inventiveness and innovation in displays involving a wide range of Turkish goods and services.

The three-day event, organized by Istanbul-based Ladin Exhibitions and Congress Co., proved to be a great event. It not only brought Turkish and Jordanian businessmen together, it was also a valuable opportunity for the Jordanian public to familiarize themselves with Turkish products.

More than 100 Turkish products from over 90 companies were on display. Anything and everything was put on show—from automotive products to industrial machines, construction material and chemicals to consumer goods, textiles, leather and shoe wear as well



as sewing cotton and various Turkish culinary delights. Also present were 200 Jordanian representatives and agents who sell Turkish products in Jordan.

The fair's objectives, which is given the direct support of the Turkish government, is to promote the export of Turkish products to Jordan and the region, to create a platform that will enable Turkish busi-

nessmen to meet with their Jordanian partners and form business partnerships. With this in mind, there were also about 150 Palestinian businessmen from the Occupied Territories at the expo.

"We hope that Turkish Days in Jordan will open the doors to a long-lasting cooperation between Turkish and Jordanian businessmen," declared

Devrim Erol, president of Ladin. The range of products on display were impressively varied and demonstrated the technical edge of modern Turkey, not only in terms of production, but also in its ability to market its goods to its neighbors.

The show had a dynamic atmosphere about it. One Jordanian businessman visiting the show said that he had met a lot of Turkish entrepreneurs and that he was going to establish joint ventures with one of them.

The fair was also attended by professionals like civil engineers and academics who learned about developments in the building and construction sector. According to Miss Gulsevün Onur, chief executive of Sectron, an Istanbul based Export Promotion Center, "we are promoting everything Turkish, and surprisingly, engineers as well as businessmen come to us for consultations."

And already the venue is being given the 'thumbs up' by the many people who attended. Mohammad Lutfi, a bank manager in Bayader Wadi Al Sir, said that the event provided customers with the chance to meet in person, manufacturers with whom they currently, or may eventually, conduct business. "This is valuable for both existing and new customers," he said.

Above all, as Turkey and Jordan share a common history, religion and culture, the exhibition created an opportunity to evaluate the two countries' unique strategic positions in addition to strengthening the economic relationship between them.

## State-of-the-art firm 'drops the chute' for cement production

By Ibtisam Awadlat

Special to The Star

THE CONSTRUCTION sector continues to suffer from the perennial increase in the cost of building materials. Cement prices are constantly on the increase—something which has frequently resulted in the collapse of many construction projects.

But this could soon change. The cement market seems to have found a new competitor.

The Zaqra Investment (Holding) Co. has consolidated movements of nearly JD 5.24 million during 1997, while its pretax profits were JD 731,500. Its budget was about JD 111 million at the end of last year, marking a rise of 50% over 1996. The company's shareholders' rights went up by 29.4% to reach JD 57.9 million. Zaqra Investment is currently busy carrying out touristic and investment projects estimated at JD 45.2 million. It succeeded recently in raising its capital from JD 40 million to JD 50 million.

For the foreign side, the original Italian company, Sistem Industrial Premix (SIP) has been operating in the field of cement production for the last 31 years. For the present project, it has chosen Jordan as its base for the partnership project.

"After an extensive two-year study, the Italian investors were convinced that a cement factory in this country could be successful," said Omar Fathallah, the Jordanian partner of the project.

The first part of the project has already cost the partners JD 1.5 million, with 90 per cent of the raw materials coming from Jordan.

"We will provide the Jordanian market with a competitive quality product at a reasonable price," Fathallah said.

"We already have many contracts with Arab countries, and could even export to America," the Jordanian investor added.

But besides investment, the



Omar Fathallah

Italian side is doing their bit as well.

About 20 kilograms of materials essential in preserving the humidity of the cement in order to guarantee a good finish has been imported from Italy. This is essential to upgrading quality.

Colored cement will be available from the new company, for those who seek a distinctive appearance. The product also has other uses, for example, as an adhesive for ceramic tiles. The cement also makes a good mortar for plastering.

The investment atmosphere is very encouraging. All services are available. Fathallah says of the Zaqra Free Zone. He said that both the director of the Zone, Abdallah Madadha and the its employees have been very helpful in providing investors with top-of-the-line facilities.

The company space is located in eight hectares of land, and will begin production at around 5000 packages of cement per day. To meet increased demand, it has been built to accommodate work around the clock.

The Jordanian businessman explained that the company will offer good job opportunities for Jordanians and will help boost exports. Even some of the machines used in the factory were made in Jordan, making it a further promotion of Jordanian industry.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Sunday, chaired a meeting in the Planning Ministry regarding ways of increasing the competitiveness of Jordan's economy. The Prince called for transcending the country's stable economy in order to achieve one marked by permanent growth. Prince Hassan reiterated his call for a dialogue between the private and public sectors, something that would make a qualitative change in the people's standard of living. He added this requires an upgrade of Jordanian industries in line with international standards. He singled out pharmaceuticals and minerals in particular.

## Crackdown urged on money launderers using global financial system

By Ian Hamilton Fazey

AT LEAST \$300 million in illegally earned money is laundered daily through the world's increasingly globalized financial system, as drug runners and other criminals convert their profits into usable funds, according to a report.

Commissioned by the United Nations' International Drug Control Program for a special session of the UN general assembly on drugs next month, the report says the international financial system has become "a money launderer's dream," processing a large part of the estimated \$200 billion of drug money laundered annually.

The program will ask UN member states to legislate by 2003 to counter money laundering more effectively. The main targets for improved control

will be financial havens, banking secrecy and the transparency of asset ownership and transactions. Law enforcers want to attack anonymous ownership of companies registered in financial havens and offshore trusts, as well as to strengthen international cooperation to catch money launderers.

Fewer than 30 of the UN's 185 member countries are taking measures to combat money laundering to comply with a 1988 international convention. This means that law enforcers recover only between \$100 million and \$500 million in their best years.

The biggest anti-money laundering operation in US history involving 12 Mexican banks arrested last week more than 100 bank officials and alleged drug traffickers, but will eventually recover only \$157 million.

The volume of transactions carried out through electronic payment and clearing systems has made money laundering almost impossible to detect. More than \$2,000 billion is moved each day in 465,000 transactions by the Clearing House for International Payments Systems (Chips) and Fedwire, the latter operated by the US Federal Reserve. Another \$20,000 transfer messages.

dollar value unknown, are sent by the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (Swift). Money laundering is estimated to account for less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the transfers involved.

Many offshore financial havens are criticized for making it too easy to set up "closet and computer" banks with full access to the international financial system. Supervision may then be poor, or personnel inadequately trained to do it properly.

The report lists 18 financial centres in the Caribbean or Central America, 16 in Europe including Switzerland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, 11 in the Asia-Pacific region, three in the Gulf and eastern Mediterranean and three in or off Africa.

Exporting bulk cash, usually in \$100 bills and sometimes under diplomatic cover, is the favoured method of reaching banks where no questions will be asked. Casinos in offshore centres are a favourite for converting funds: cash is exchanged for gambling chips, the launderer plays for a while, then changes the chips back again.

Financial Times Syndication

## Business Chronicle

## Six months to get house in order

JORDANIAN PHARMACEUTICALS manufacturers have been given another six months to put their house in order and improve the quality of their products to comply with international standards and specifications.

Local pharmaceutical companies have been facing difficulties over the last few months. They are accused of not abiding by the requirements of the World Trade Organization (WTO) or following the general principles of Intellectual Property Rights.

These constitute the reasons why the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) has officially asked the US to put Jordan on "a priority watch list."

Since the US decision to do so, local pharmaceutical manufacturers have been fearing the worst, alternately displaying resentment and bitterness at the US move, while at the same time believing that they are in the right and that their products do conform to international standards.

PhRMA has openly criticized Jordanian drug manufacturers for cutting into its market share by copying, without permission, some of its pharmaceutical formulas. Losses to American companies are estimated to be as high as \$50 million annually. But this is disputed by local producers, who stress that the sum is exaggerated.

They also reject the idea that they are violating intellectual property rights, and maintain that they are operating above boards. Nevertheless, the recent American decision to provide them with six months to "readjust" their status has come as a welcome relief.

It appears that local drug manufacturers are conceding that they must "rehabilitate" and in so doing would boost the competitiveness of their industry. This issue becomes especially pertinent when it is realized that Jordan is due to join the WTO within the next two years.

Also, the rehabilitation is essential because of other global agreements. The EU-Jordan partnership agreement has given Jordanian manufacturers a grace period of three years to adapt to regulations stipulated in the pact.

The secretary general of the Jordan Union of Pharmaceuticals Manufacturers, Maher Matallqa stressed the need to be fair in the negotiations leading up to the WTO membership in order to avoid a serious loss of investments in pharmaceuticals which could hit the \$400 million mark.

He also emphasized that the volume of drugs which is subjected to letters of patent is no more than 25 percent of total medicines on sale in Jordan.

But the manufacturers stress that they have the right to call for financial support and other privileges in order to compensate the loss they are expected to bear in the future. General director of the Al Hikma Pharmaceutical Co. Mazen Darwazah, says that Egypt, Spain and Tunisia have been allowed between five and 10 years to readjust their status. "All what we are asking for is fair treatment, and sufficient time—not less than five years—to make the required adjustments."

Referring to the issue of letters of patent as they relate to drug manufacturing firms, Darwazah says that 90 percent of international pharmaceutical companies sell drugs subject to limited letters of patent, and that Jordan is not the sole country which follows such measures. He calls on the government to cooperate with local drug producers to avoid more crises that would only further threaten the industry's future.

Pharmaceuticals rank second among Jordanian exports, after minerals. They stand at about \$130 million annually.

## Caspian pipeline group awaits shake-up

By Robert Corzine

MANAGEMENT shake-up is expected over the next few weeks at the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), the \$2 billion project to build the first new oil export system from the Caspian Sea region since the break-up of the Soviet Union.

The planned shake-up is part of a package of measures which shareholders have organized to put the project back on track after management last year failed to meet their targets, according to western executives close to the consortium.

The project, funded by 10 of the world's biggest international oil companies, envisages a 1,500 kilometer pipeline to run from the Tengiz oil field in western Kazakhstan to a dedicated export terminal near the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk.

However, the project has been plagued by political and commercial disputes since its inception in 1992. The progress of CPC has been watched closely by the world's oil industry, which sees it as a bellwether for international co-operation in opening the vast oil resources of the Caspian to world markets.

The top six jobs at CPC are reserved for certain companies within the consortium.

The general director is nominated by Lukoil, the Russian oil company.

Senior posts are also reserved for other big shareholders, such as Chevron and Mobil of the US, which between them own 70 per cent of Tengiz and Rosneft, Russia's largest remaining state-owned oil company.

Shareholders are thought to have been especially concerned about the failure of top CPC executives to delegate authority. "All decisions were made by one or two people," said an executive with one western shareholder. "Even senior people couldn't decide on their own to travel to Houston to talk directly with Fluor Daniel, the prime contractor."

In addition to management changes, shareholders are expected to set new performance targets for the CPC. They will also monitor more closely the progress of the consortium, especially as it draws closer to the 1 October target date for awarding big contracts for long lead-time items, such as pipe. Executives from Fluor Daniel are due to brief shareholders this week on a detailed contracting strategy.

Those CPC shareholders who are also owners of Tengiz are keen to see the pipeline operational by the end of 2000, although they concede that such a timetable is ambitious. Earlier this month CPC got an important regulatory approval from Russian environmental authorities.

The general route of the pipeline, which will pass through the Russian regions of Kalmykia, Astrakhan, Stavropol and Krasnodar, has been agreed, but negotiations to acquire land and permission from affected individuals and groups have yet to be finalized. Officials say ground must be broken early next year to complete the project by the end of 2000.

Financial Times Syndication

WATCH  
Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

23-26 May

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jordan Trade Center</li> <li>Arab Paper Industry</li> <li>Middle East Complex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arab Paper Industry</li> <li>Jordan Investment Bank</li> <li>National Savings House</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arab Paper Industry</li> <li>Jordan Investment Bank</li> <li>National Savings House</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IMCO</li> <li>Universal Industry</li> <li>National Savings House</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universal Chemical Industries</li> <li>Woolen Industry</li> <li>Jordan Kuwait Bank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arab Aluminum Industry</li> <li>Arab Investment</li> <li>National Industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Islamic Insurance</li> <li>Jordan Trading</li> <li>United Engineering</li> </ul>	
General Price Pointer	180.620	180.420	180.520
Trade Volume	1181648	1262008	1238047
Stock Volume	549081	643802	630715
Highest Traded Stocks	318885	633665	504050
Arab Bank			

All data provided by ACCESS Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949

The **Star** <http://star.arabia.com>  
Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly  
**Online**



# Mandate empowers Khatami in efforts to transform Iran

By Robin Wright

TEHRAN, Iran—A year after his stunning upset election victory, President Mohammad Khatami has defied conservative political sabotage at home and engaged long-standing rivals abroad to craft the framework for a new era in Iran.

Yet the process—and the battles that go with it—are far from over.

"Iranian society is still in the midst of a deep historic transition. Many traditional ways of behavior are drastically being changed," said Ibrahim Yazdi, a leading politician. "The problem is that we have not yet developed acceptable formulas to replace the old way."

Other political confrontations, such as the national scandal sparked by the arrest of Tehran's mayor last month, will almost certainly erupt during the reformist president's first four-year term, analysts here predict. And Khatami still does not have control over key levers of power, which limits the scope of change possible.

But the new president's popularity—and his mandate—are even stronger today than when he overcame the clerical establishment and two other candidates with 70 percent of the vote a year ago.

In an unprecedented display of support for any president since the revolution, tens of thousands of Iranians paraded through Tehran on Saturday with banners declaring "Khatami, we love you" and "We are ready to sacrifice our life for you."

"Khatami has proven very skillful in going on the offensive. Any time he's been attacked, he's been able to push others back," said Hadi Semati of the Research Institute for Mideast Studies in Tehran.

As a result, new political discourse and greater public freedoms are finally allowing the Islamic Republic to focus on the last but most difficult issue of its revolution: how to modernize and institutionalize Islam so that the emphasis is on political and economic empowerment, not just ideology.

That does not mean diminishing Islam. In the event of spiritual problems, the number for the Voice of the Holy Koran is still listed among the emergency numbers—with police, fire and ambulance—in Iranian telephone books and newspapers. Legislation and school curricula still have to have an Islamic stamp of approval.

The past year has, however, featured a new balance and less fanaticism. So while Iranian television remains tediously bland, a stage version of "Les Misérables" in Persian just finished a sold-out, six-month run at the Bahman Cultural Center. It was replaced by a Molière farce.

Tehran actually defied the clergy this month during Ashura, which commemorates the heroic martyrdom of the prophet Mohammed's grandson that triggered Islam's greatest schism and the birth of Shiite Islam 13 centuries ago.

The faithful were told not to parade with feather-headed black mantles, or *alam*, because they resemble crosses, and not to play drums, since music is publicly banned during the mourning rite. But the drums and man-



ties were out in force as dozens of noisy parades wound through downtown boulevards and neighborhood streets.

Ashura this year had the joyous atmosphere of a street party as men, women and children turned out on the warm spring nights for public plays, parades, free food and candlelight processions.

"This could never have happened before Khatami," an awed merchant said.

Debates about religion, once the agent of conformity, now turn to talk of pluralism. In during articles and speeches this spring, Iran's leading philosopher has challenged a central concept expressed in daily Muslim prayer for 13 centuries, entreatings God to lead believers to "the right path."

"Many say the only right path is Islam and the rest stray or are deviant. I argue that there are many right paths," said Abdul Karim Soroush, who was squeezed out of several jobs by the previous government and also physically attacked by religious radicals. Now the crowds at his public lectures on Wednesday evenings spill into the streets.

Soroush is one of a growing number of thinkers exploring the compatibility of Islam and democracy.

The biggest single problem for Khatami is that these hold, new ideas from Iran's budding civil society have spawned an equally bold backlash.

At a meeting of military officers Thursday, Brig. Gen. Mohammad Ali

Jafari warned that Iran's Revolutionary Guards "are ready to be sacrificed for Islam and the revolution."

Whether the guards or any other force could really challenge the government is widely disputed—in part because most of the rank and file in all branches of the military voted for Khatami, Iranian analysts say.

The more practical day-to-day challenge for Khatami comes from conservatives who still have a hold on parliament, the judiciary and internal security forces. Their patron is Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, who wields the ultimate veto.

The conservatives lost a round on the arrest of Tehran's reformist mayor, Gholamhossein Karubashi, a pivotal Khatami political ally, when public outcry and the threat of demonstrations led Khamenei to order his release. Karubashi has yet to face trial, but he is likely to either escape graft charges or face minimal punishment.

"Differences among factions are great, but they're all interested in preventing developments that jeopardize the stability of the state. In the end, they'll settle disputes to avoid anything too risky," said a Western envoy.

The case does not, however, represent a pure victory for Khatami's supporters. Before the arrest, Iran's politics were engaged in debate on four issues critical to political change:

■ The power of the Council of Guardians, a religious oversight committee, to disqualify candidates, such as a former Cabinet minister who had

won 11 years of confidence.

■ Judicial excesses, including the arrest of several deputy mayors.

■ Police failure to rein in religious hooligans of Ansar-e Hezbollah, or Helpers of the Party of God, who regularly attack and intimidate their enemies.

■ Media bias on Iranian television and radio, particularly during elections. Growing public pressures threatened to diminish conservative influence in all four areas. But as Khatami's forces expended political clout on the mayoral crisis, debate was shelved.

Both insiders and envoys here claim that the rivalry is part of what has become an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary process.

This is not a clash, just the expression of different schools of thought, and we're glad to see it happen," said Gholam Reza Shirazian, a conservative member of parliament who attended Iowa State and Auburn universities.

The one problem that could undermine Khatami's mandate is the economy, which he has conceded is "sick." The challenge plays out on three fronts.

First is income. Because of plummeting oil prices, budget calculations based on \$18 a barrel were downgraded to reflect a price of \$16.50 and then \$12. Oil revenues—which account for 85 percent of Iran's hard-currency earnings and half of government revenues—will probably not exceed \$10 billion this year. And the country has a foreign debt repayment of \$5 billion due this year.

Second is demographics. Khatami's biggest constituency was young people, who account for more than half of Iran's 63 million people. Severe unemployment, somewhere between the official 11 percent and economists' estimates of up to 20 percent, looms as unprecedented numbers of young people enter the labor market.

Third is the cost of badly needed reforms. The changes on Khatami's agenda—privatization, more foreign investment, subsidy cuts and reducing reliance on petrochemicals—would have an immediate impact on his constituency, which is most heavily dependent on food subsidies and government employment.

Yet the average GNP growth rate has hovered near 4 percent for the last few years.

Ironically, Khatami's goal of moving from revolution to reform received a major boost last week from the United States, when the Clinton administration decided to waive sanctions against a European-Asian consortium that plans the biggest foreign investment in Iran since the 1979 revolution, a \$2 billion deal to develop offshore gas fields.

The waiver is likely to encourage other foreign investors who had deferred similar decisions out of fear that they too might face US sanctions, analysts here predict. And new capital could be the single biggest boost in helping Khatami through both painful economic reforms and political change.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



A Lebanese woman casts her vote last week. For the first time in 35 years Lebanon is holding municipal elections. Results at the initial stage of voting show that Hezbollah and several members of opposition Christian parties are getting the majority of support.

## Saudi official says no foreign party involved in Khobar blast

By John Lancaster and John Daniszewski

CAIRO, Egypt—For the first time, a senior Saudi security official Friday publicly

absolved Iran of involvement in the June 1996 bombing of a US military housing complex that killed 19 American service personnel, blaming the attack on Saudi dissidents.

Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz, the Saudi interior minister, told Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Rai' al Aam* in a recent interview that the bombing "took place at Saudi hands," adding, "No foreign party had any role in it."

The statement, the first definitive Saudi finding in the nearly two-year investigation, seemed to rule out earlier hints that Iran or the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement based in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley had played a role in the worst-ever anti-US terrorist attack in the Gulf.

On the evening of June 25, 1996, a truck pulled up to a fence separating the Khobar Towers housing complex from a public parking lot. The driver

jumped into an accomplice's car, which sped away. Suspecting an attack, US military police on a nearby roof raised an alarm. But only a few of the service personnel could be evacuated before a mammoth truck bomb exploded, shearing off the front of the apartment tower closer to the explosion and sending deadly shards of

glass flying through the entire camp.

Besides the 19 killed, the blast injured 384 people.

Nayef's statement contradicts long-standing suspicions in Washington that the attack was carried out by Shiite Muslim extremists with support from Iran's radical Islamic government. Those suspicions had been fueled in part by the Saudi government, which initially blamed extremists within the Saudi Shiite Muslim community.

Shiites constitute a minority—with close ties to religious leaders in Shiite-majority Iran—among Saudi Arabia's 12 million citizens, most of whom are members of the main Sunni branch of Islam.

Saudi dissident groups abroad have long predicted that the Saudi ruling family would try to pin the Khobar attack either on a foreign country or on Saudi Arabia's Shiite minority, to avoid revealing the extent of the opposition it faces from dissidents within the country's Sunni majority.

Prince Nayef's admission that only Saudis were involved in the blast also raises the question of whether the attack was linked to a November 1995 bombing in Riyadh of a US training facility for members of the Saudi national guard. Five US military personnel died in that bombing, and four Saudis, who confessed and said they were motivated by radical Islamic beliefs, were beheaded before they could be inter-

viewed by US officials.

But the Khobar Towers case remains shrouded in secrecy. In his interview, Nayef gave no indication whether the government had arrested those responsible for the blast, or even if he knows who they are. Several months ago, the Prince suggested publicly that the investigation was nearly complete. But a deputy said in a statement last month that all the details were not yet known.

Earlier in the investigation, there were reports that a previously unknown Shiite opposition group, Saudi Hezbollah, had been implicated. Other suspicions focused on an Iranian link, especially when a Saudi Shiite dissident, Hani Abdel Rahim Hussein Sayegh, was apprehended in Canada last year and appeared ready to cooperate with US authorities to avoid extradition to Saudi Arabia.

But when Sayegh reached the United States, he abrogated a plea-bargain deal with prosecutors and refused to cooperate. The US case subsequently fell apart for lack of evidence and Sayegh was handed over to US immigration officials for deportation.

Saudi authorities demand his extradition, but he remains in custody in the United States, awaiting a ruling on whether he is to be deported to Saudi Arabia or to another country.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

# Pakistan caught between perceived weakness, economic sanctions

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan—Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif told the nation Saturday that he would retaliate against any Indian aggression, capping two weeks of increasingly acrimonious relations between the two countries.

At his first news conference since India tested five nuclear devices earlier this month, Sharif tried to respond to a series of warnings by Indian officials over contested territory in the mountainous region of Kashmir.

"Statements emanating from Indian leaders virtually amount to nuclear blackmail," Sharif said in a statement broadcast around the country. "Any misadventure will be met with a resolute response."

Sharif made his remarks as shelling between the two nations' armies escalated along their disputed northern border. The artillery duels grew so intense Saturday night that the shell bursts could be seen and heard from this city, the capital of Pakistani-held Kashmir, 35 miles from the Indian frontier.

India and Pakistan have fought two wars over Kashmir in the past 50 years, and a guerrilla insurgency in the Indian-controlled portion of the region has killed more than 20,000 people in the past decade. The two sides often exchange artillery fire, but people on both sides of the border are concerned that such skirmishes could now spark a war between nuclear-armed states.

The Indian government provoked worldwide condemnation when it tested five nuclear devices, including a hydrogen bomb, at a desert laboratory earlier this month. India said it needed the tests to ensure its security in a dangerous region of the world.

The United States and Japan have each imposed limited economic sanctions on India.

Sharif is under intense pressure at home to respond by testing a Pakistani nuclear weapon, but he is being urged by leaders

across the globe not to do so. Some countries, like the United States, have threatened economic sanctions that many experts say could wreck Pakistan's weak economy.

As Pakistan struggles to decide whether to defy world opinion and respond to India's nuclear tests with tests of its own, the leadership here is grappling with two unsavory and politically dangerous choices: forgo testing and cope with India's nuclear threats and perceived blackmail, or explode a nuclear device and suffer economic sanctions that could force the country into default.

Either course could prove politically lethal for Sharif. There is widespread demand in Pakistan—at the street level, in the newspapers and by opposition leaders—for the nation to test its own weapon. Defying that popular sentiment would give the opposition, particularly former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, a powerful weapon against Sharif's government.

At the same time, there is increasing fear that the economic sanctions that could follow testing would be devastating for this impoverished country of 135 million people. Numerous financial and other analysts said last week that sanctions likely would force Pakistan into default on its international debt payments, possibly triggering higher prices, currency devaluation and political unrest.

Although foreign governments—particularly those of the United States and Japan, which imposed sanctions on India after its test two weeks ago—are considering financial and military incentives to dissuade Sharif's government from testing a nuclear device, it is unclear whether any package will be enough, particularly if it appears to involve trading Pakistan's security for debt relief or other financial benefits.

In the end, the only likely deterrent against a nuclear weapon is another nuclear weapon, "and the Indians are suck-

ing us in," Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan said in an interview. Considered one of the leading pro-test hawks in Sharif's cabinet, Khan said the decision on testing is still being weighed.

The possibility of not testing, "as remote as it seems, could be there if the West, particularly Japan and the United States, can put together at very short notice a way to remove the disparity that exists between (India's and Pakistan's) conventional weaponry and to bring back the strategic balance that existed between us," perhaps through some sort of "umbrella" defense agreement, Khan said.

The matter is urgent, he said, because the legislature reconvenes June 5. Sharif presents his budget about a week later, and "the prime minister has to go to the people and say: 'We can live with this. It meets our requirements.'"

Few Pakistanis have come out publicly against testing, but as the crushing financial cost of such a move becomes clear, many people, particularly businesspeople, are privately approaching Sharif—one of the country's leading businessmen—to warn that the impact could be severe. Financiers telegraphed their views last week at the Karachi Stock Exchange, where panic selling, much of it apparently by foreigners, drove the market down 350 points Friday to close at 12,012, a 10-year low.

Potential sanctions threaten to blow a hole in the economy. Pakistan, one of the world's poorest countries, has an adjusted per capita income of about \$2,100 per year and a literacy rate of 39 percent. About one in seven children dies before the age of five.

By many of the same standards, India is even poorer. But with an economy about five times as big as Pakistan's and a history of self-sufficiency, it can much more easily withstand a cutoff of US aid, a ban on American bank loans to its government and a potential ban on World Bank Inter-



Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif

national Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank assistance—all of which are required under the US Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act passed in 1994.

Pakistan, historically, has been more integrated with world markets. While India has about \$43 billion in debt and \$28 billion in foreign exchange reserves, Pakistan is saddled with a \$50 billion debt, a figure roughly equal to its gross domestic product, and it has just \$1 billion in foreign reserves. Debt payments, some of which are funded with international loans, cost \$5.5 billion a year, or about 54 percent of Pakistan's annual \$10.3 billion budget. The military eats 29 percent of the budget (\$3 billion).

That leaves about \$515 million for law

enforcement, education, health care, housing and all other community and social services. On the revenue side, only 1 in 100 people here pays income taxes, and total tax revenues raise just \$6.9 billion—only two-thirds of the budget—showing the country's dependence on foreign assistance and loans.

A cutoff of foreign aid could lead to a \$4.2 billion shortfall by year's end with an inevitable default, a foreign ministry official said. The government has not released official figures about the impact of sanctions or explained the fallout and sacrifices that citizens might expect. A government spokesman said that any shortfall could be financed by rich Pakistanis who live overseas and by wealthy Arab states.

In an interview, Yasin Lakhani, president of the Karachi Stock Exchange, said he regrets that many people here believe an anti-bomb stance is unpatriotic, thus stifling debate.

"Pakistan's economy is too fragile to take a blow from nuclear tests," Lakhani said. "An actual occurrence of tests would wipe out the entire capital of the stock market."

The delay in deciding whether to proceed with tests also reflects deep anxiety about Pakistan's ability to put the final touches on a fool-proof nuclear bomb. An underground test that failed to match the success of India's would be psychologically devastating for Pakistan and could put the country in a worse security dilemma than if it did not test at all.

Most of Pakistan's nuclear program was developed with Chinese materials and technical assistance, according to US intelligence agencies. According to the country's former top military official, retired army chief of staff Mirza Aslam Beg, Pakistan successfully completed a computerized "cold test" of its nuclear bomb-making technology in the late 1980s. But Pakistan needs China's help to rapidly complete a test bomb, free of glitches, that

will be certain to explode, according to senior Pakistani officials familiar with the nuclear program. Officials expect to receive the help, he said, even if they didn't. Pakistan could finish building and testing a nuclear device, though it would take a lot longer.

When Indian Home Minister L.K. Advani warned Pakistan last week that it had to face the region's new strategic reality, many here saw it as intolerable nuclear blackmail that required Pakistan to achieve nuclear parity for a secure future.

Pakistan was in the midst of preparing a test explosion in December 1995, at the same time India was gearing up to test its nuclear capabilities—when US intelligence analysts discovered the preparations. Pakistani officials said, US officials confronted top Indian and Pakistani officials with satellite images confirming their plans and brokered a deal for them to halt preparations, Pakistani officials said.

Now, scientists are working feverishly to prepare the Chagai Hills test site in the Baluchistan desert near the border with Iran.

"Had we been allowed to complete all the technical preparations (in 1995), it would have saved a lot of time and effort being consumed today," a senior official said.

In fact, whether Pakistan is ready to detonate an underground nuclear device or not, the delay suits other purposes. Prime Minister Sharif appears cool, deliberate and statesmanlike by not instantly reacting to emotional demands for a test. In the interim, Pakistan can install equipment to capture a larger range of data at the test site for later analysis.

The delay also permits Pakistan to get a more complete picture of how the world reacts to India's tests, and how deep the commitment is to economic sanctions.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



## Ortega takes helm in reform effort Sandinistas attempt to broaden influence

By Juanita Darling

MANAGUA, Nicaragua—Struggling to regroup after two resounding rejections by voters that left them with shrinking influence in the country they once ruled, the Sandinista National Liberation Front this weekend clung to their top leaders while trying to make their party less threatening to Nicaragua's emerging entrepreneurs.

During a two-day convention that ended late Saturday, delegates elected two former "commandantes"—Daniel Ortega and Tomas Borge—to head a 15-member National Directorate that also will include two businessmen. The resulting mixed signals of continuity and change left questions about whether the Sandinistas can reconstruct themselves into a force that can win elections.

Of all the leftist guerrillas who took to the mountains in the 1970s and 80s to battle Central American dictators, only the Sandinistas actually came to power. They ruled Nicaragua from 1979 to 1990, when voters turned Ortega out of the presidency. He was defeated again in 1996.

Now, like other Central American leftists, the Sandinistas are struggling to change from a guerrilla movement into an effective political party. And they are finding that revolution may have been easier than reform.

Their quandary, evident at the weekend convention, is the starkest example of a problem being felt in varying degrees by insurgent-turned-politicians throughout the isthmus: The blood and sacrifices of the guerrilla days are what unify their movements and give them legitimacy. But the old rebel commanders cannot marshal votes.

"Times have changed," said Vilma Nunez, a Sandinista loyalist and human rights activist. "The wars of liberation had a cost, and the people who made the revolution have to assume those costs." The former commanders were responsible for death and destruction, which ensures that a significant number of voters will never support them, she said.

In El Salvador, leadership of the ex-guerrillas of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, or FMLN, has shifted from hard-line Communists to more conciliatory ex-fighters. Currently, only one of the candidates for the party's nomination for president in next year's election is a former commandante.

Several leading candidates are not even party members. When some party loyalists raised objections to the civilian candidates, others took to the streets.

full-page newspaper advertisements questioning why former commandantes should continue to represent a peace-time political party.

The argument for looking outside the former guerrilla ranks for candidates is bolstered by election results. In last year's mayoral races, the FMLN formed coalitions with sympathetic smaller parties to elect noncombatants, such as Hector Silva, now mayor of San Salvador, the Salvadoran capital.

In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas have incorporated into their ranks a few businesspeople and former Contras—rebels against their own regime in the 1980s. But the top party positions and nominations have been confined to the same small group that led the fighting.

Even as the 52-year-old Ortega was once again re-elected secretary-general of the Sandinistas, a position he has held continuously since 1980, he held out hope that the party might open up. "We don't want to insist on a precondition that the candidates must come from the (party) ranks," he said.

But that was too little for reform-minded Sandinistas. "This is a betrayal," said Nunez, who decided not to attend the convention when the party leadership opted to let Ortega run unopposed for re-election. "We needed real change at this convention."

A reformist challenged the 67-year-old Borge for the assistant secretary-general post but lost, 224-199.

The decision not to challenge Ortega is at the heart of the party's dilemma, said political analyst Luis Sanchez.

"The Sandinistas are like a crumbling house that is held up by one rotten pillar, which is Daniel Ortega," he said. "With Ortega, nothing changes, but without him, it all falls down."

As president, Ortega led this country through socialist economic reforms, a civil war with American-backed rebels and a US boycott. Together, they left Nicaragua the second-poorest nation in the Americas after Haiti.

At the same time, critics have accused Ortega and the Sandinista leadership of enriching themselves by taking control of expropriated properties and businesses.

Eight years of free-market reforms by subsequent administrations have done little to alleviate an unemployment rate estimated at 60 percent that has left more than 80 percent of the population living below the poverty line.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



Ortega

## Northern Ireland set to pick assembly

BELFAST, Northern Ireland—As the headline writers hauled out their biggest fonts to report the result of this weekend's historic referendum, Northern Ireland's politicians went back to work Sunday to prepare for the next major step in the peace process—another crucial vote, just a month away.

In a referendum that prompted the largest voter turnout ever here, 71.1 percent gave their approval to the agreement reached April 10 after two years of multi-party negotiations. The size of the "yes" vote suggests that the plan won majority support across the community—from Protestants as well as Catholics, from staunch pro-Britain voters as well as those who want the province to break its ties with London and merge with the Republic of Ireland to the south.

Voters in the Republic backed the plan by an even stronger margin, with 94 percent supporting changes in their country's constitution that will be necessary for the plan to be implemented.

The gun, the bomb, and even the ground-to-ground missile have been central tools of a bitter political dispute here as to whether Northern Ireland should remain in the United Kingdom or become part of Ireland. Sectarian forces have been fighting for three decades, and more than 3,400 people have been killed—some in street warfare and some in terrorist bombings. Victims have ranged from the elderly to elementary school students caught in cross-fire on a playground.

The 68-page agreement approved this weekend was worked out by eight political parties and the governments of Britain and Ireland in months of talks chaired by an American former Senate majority leader George Mitchell.

The deal calls for Northern Ireland to retain its political allegiance to Britain. But it creates new political mechanisms under which the people of this province could choose, by majority vote, to break with London and merge with the Republic of Ireland. It includes a somewhat vague plan for disarming the various paramilitary groups within two years and promises the eventual release of hundreds of sectarian fighters locked up in Irish or British prisons.

Northern Ireland is a world of rolling green hills, surrounding valleys that are even greener and dappled, these late spring days, with purple splashes of blooming lilac. It is primarily agricultural country, except for some new high-tech plants in Londonderry and the old factories and shipyards of Belfast, where in fact the Titanic was built.

Over the past decade or so, a new generation of residents—tired of living in a society where schools, parks and even churches must be protected by barbed wire and concrete walls—began to demand new



rules that would govern their occupation of this otherwise pastoral setting.

The old political parties, which focused on angry memories and the settling of old scores, gave way to new political leadership, in both the nationalist and unionist communities, that looked to the future and constantly invoked the word "peace."

This weekend's election results suggest that these peace-oriented parties are now in the strongest position for the next step in Northern Ireland's transition: the election to be held June 25 for a new Northern Ireland Assembly. This is a new governing body created by the agreement. It will give the province a considerable degree of local autonomy even as it retains its political ties to Britain.

If parties that oppose the agreement win a significant number of places in the 108-seat assembly, they could block progress on other aspects

of the plan.

But the voting on this weekend's referendum suggests that people here are ready to move ahead with the agreement. "In many ways, perhaps, the people are ahead of some of the politicians," said Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, the political arm of the Irish Republican Army, one of the oldest Northern Ireland terrorist groups.

The yes vote in the referendum clears the way for the June election for the Assembly, from which a multi-party executive is to be selected on the basis of a proportional vote.

"This agreement is supported across the whole community with a majority in both camps," said Marjorie "Mick" Mowlam, the British Cabinet secretary in charge of Northern Ireland. "The builders of the future can now come together to make the agreement work."

But Protestant opponents of the agreement who fear it will lead to a united Ireland refused

to acknowledge defeat. Opposition firebrand Reverend Ian Paisley insisted that the 28.8 percent no vote was all Protestant and translated into a 56.6 percent majority of unionist voters against the accord.

Regardless of the count, the unrepentant Paisley demonstrated that his rejectionist camp will not disappear quietly into the political sunset. He pledged to run in the upcoming election with the aim of taking over the assembly.

The accord has checks and balances that are meant to maintain an equilibrium between Protestant and Catholic interests, but these safeguards also could backfire if Paisley manages to get enough rejectionists elected to the assembly.

In addition, there are other potential stumbling blocks to the plan that do not depend on Paisley.

Sinn Fein is sure to win enough votes to have at least one seat on the 12-member executive. Trimble and other moderate unionists say they do not want any Sinn Fein member in a Cabinet post unless the IRA has handed over its weapons, but Sinn Fein leaders say they are an unarmed political party and that the agreement requires them only to use their influence to get paramilitary organizations to give up their guns.

"What they're asking for is surrender," said Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator. "What they're asking for is a military victory, and these aren't on offer."

A resumption of political violence also could threaten the agreement. The IRA and major Protestant paramilitary groups are honoring a cease-fire, but there are republican splinter groups that reject the accord as a sellout in British rule.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Habibie reshuffles cabinet, calls for elections

# Suharto resignation ushers in new era for Indonesia

JAKARTA, Indonesia—Government troops removed several thousand university students from the national parliament grounds here early Saturday, peacefully ending a five-day protest that led to the resignation of long-time ruler President Suharto.

Only a handful of students resisted. Most mounted a fleet of waiting buses singing. Others walked to the nearby campus.

As the students left, displaying flags and political banners, the closing ranks of troops lowered their weapons, smiled and waved as several dozen foreign television camera crews filmed the scene. It was clear that the troops had been trained not only to handle the students but also the hordes of foreign reporters.

"These students are our family, our brothers and sisters," one soldier shouted in English. Earlier in the day, the parliament had been the scene for several emotional clashes and fights between rival factions of students.

After a remarkable 10 days of tension, marked by violence and the fall of Asia's longest ruling leader, most of the Indonesian capital edged slowly toward normalcy.

For the first time since the political crisis began May 13 with the shooting deaths of six university students in Jakarta, commerce resumed. Chaotic traffic once again clogged the streets. Mosques overflowed with Muslims attending prayers.

Yet even with Suharto gone from the political arena, Indonesians often still do not feel free to talk openly. Many ask that their names not be used when journalists engage them in casual conversation. Most do not even want to be identified as working for a particular company.

Part of the reason is that they are not sure new President B.J. Habibie will operate much differently than Suharto did, although many seem willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, at least initially. And part is because, after three decades of authoritarian rule and omnipresent undercover agents, people have been drained of spontaneity and openness.

But the overall political climate was given a boost Friday when President Habibie announced a new Cabinet that was generally praised by resi-

dent diplomats and economists. "Family, cronies and discredited elements are all gone," said a senior diplomat here. "The new Cabinet looks pretty good."

In particular, economists praised the choices for the country's economic team, including the reappointment of Ginandjar Kartasasmita, the respected finance and industry chief.

After the Cabinet announcements, the Indonesian stock market rose 5 percent and the national currency, the beleaguered rupiah, improved slightly.

But even as the capital of the world's fourth most populous country paused to take a breath, Indonesia's still precarious condition became increasingly apparent. According to

some financial experts, when Suharto finally resigned Thursday after more than three decades in power, this nation was only one week away from insolvency.

"Basically there is no banking system left," commented a foreign economist here. "The riots in Jakarta last week disrupted the food distribution system. Imports are shrinking by the month. Exports are having a difficult time because there is no financing for parts. The economy is on the verge of grinding to a complete halt."

The official exchange rate for the US dollar, for example, hovered at around 11,000 Indonesian rupiah. But the "real exchange rate"—what those seeking dollars would have to pay—was almost twice that amount, between 17,000 and 20,000.

More than anything else, it was clear that the collapsing economy was the main catalyst for Suharto's sudden exit from power.

The ailing economy and demands from the country's students for reform essentially forced the political establishment created by Suharto to turn on its master. Emerging as the key figure in the Suharto ouster is the country's taciturn military chief, General Wiranto.

Diplomatic sources say that once Wiranto concluded that Suharto needed to go, he arranged for a handful of older Suharto friends and advisers to visit the Indonesian leader and gently give him the bad news.

"General Wiranto deserves a large degree of credit," said one European economic consultant here. "Because of him, this country can be proud that so far they have managed their political transition peacefully."

In a bid to take advantage of the transition and the opportunities it presents for change, Habibie pledged Monday to lift restrictions on political parties and hold open elections as part of a package of reform measures that would liberalize life throughout the country and revive political activity that has

been stifled here for more than four decades.

Habibie said in an address before the first meeting of his new Cabinet that he recognizes the Indonesian people's "democratic aspirations" and the lingering "questions about the legality and validity of our current government." He promised to institute reforms that will not only open up Indonesia's politics but also end the "corruption, collusion and nepotism" that characterized Suharto's rule.

Beyond these comments, Habibie gave few details and no timetable for the reforms or the elections. But state secretary Akbar Tanjung told reporters that elections will be held once in six months or earlier, that would be good," he said. "But it might also take one year."

Habibie's proposals coincided with a dizzying spate of other new initiatives and announcements which, taken together, underscore the remarkable transformation here in the days since Suharto bowed to a wave of popular protest and defections from his ruling clique and relinquished power to Habibie, his vice president and longtime protégé.

In addition to the election pledge, the government also announced plans to make the judicial system more independent and to begin severing the government's close links with the businesses of Suharto's children and cronies.

When Habibie took power last week, he faced widespread skepticism about his commitment to reform, and many here predicted his tenure would be short-lived. But he now seems intent on seizing the initiative on the reform issue and demonstrating to his critics that while he may be a product of Suharto's autocratic regime, he is willing to break with the past and usher in a more liberal, democratic future.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Parliamentary election shake-down in Hungary

By Christine Spolar

BUDAPEST, Hungary—Burned pebbles of glass along Rakot Street, a side street in a working-class neighborhood here, are glinting reminders of fear and discontent in Hungary this election season.

A car bomb this week, in a country bedeviled with criminal blasts this spring, raised the heat on the ruling Socialist-led government now in a "We didn't grow up in this kind of world," said Janos, a 50-year-old market owner, whose home trembled from the explosion that engulfed three cars in the southern part of the capital.

"This election might not change things dramatically, but we have to make our points," Janos said. "The politicians better pay attention to what's happening in everyday life."

Voters will return to the polls Sunday for the third free election since the fall of communism. Hungary may be over the toughest days of market reform, but voters appear poised to register healthy complaints about the downside of economic transition.

Concern about crime, corruption and the struggle to make ends meet top voters' interests, polls show. Several high-profile crimes since January—the murder of a prominent publisher gunned down in broad daylight and a round of bombings at nightclubs, cafes and the homes of two opposition politicians—have increased jittery and resentments perceptibly.

No one expects wide swings in policy after this exercise in democracy. But Hungarian politicians are likely to feel the sting of an electorate, less than a decade beyond communism, unsure of the future but confident about shaking up political priorities in the 386-seat parliament.

"It's disillusionment," said Agnes Kereci, a former accountant who opened a flower shop in south Budapest four years ago. "Fewer and fewer people are buying flowers, and I see more and more people rummaging through trash bins over there."

"You hear the reports about scandals—and we're still struggling to get by," Hungarians know that West-

ern analysts have praised the government's work, including a tough budget reform program, begun in 1995, that reined in galloping inflation and slimmied down social programs.

Hungary, in fact, has fared well among Eastern Europe's new democracies, attracting more than \$16 billion in foreign direct investment and last year registering 4 percent growth in its gross domestic product.

Still, first-mund halloving earlier this month showed voters in this country of 10 million people were critical of, and in some cases radicalized by, decisions of the ruling coalition.

The Socialist Party, led by Prime Minister Gyula Horn, received the most votes with 32 percent. But support for its coalition partner, the liberal Free Democrats, fell sharply, attracting 8 percent of the vote compared with about 20 percent in 1994.

The big winner was the Hungarian Civic Party, a mainstream right-wing opposition group that jumped in popularity, receiving 28 percent of the ballots. A populist agrarian party, the Smallholders, also rose in popularity since 1994, winning 14 percent of the vote.

The most surprising shift was caused by voters who apparently were swayed by the views of an extreme right-wing party, The Hungarian Justice and Life Party, when dismissed by the political elite for anti-Semitic and anti-foreigner remarks, garnered 5 percent of the vote.

That was enough to enter parliament—and to rattle the political establishment, which quickly moved to reassure investors, Viktor Orban, leader of the Hungarian Civic Party, even visited the Budapest stock exchange, which had fallen sharply after the first round, to discuss Hungary's market orientation.

"There will be an economic policy change, but (the) financial sector will not be the loser in that," said Orban, a 35-year-old career politician who has emerged as a contender for prime minister.

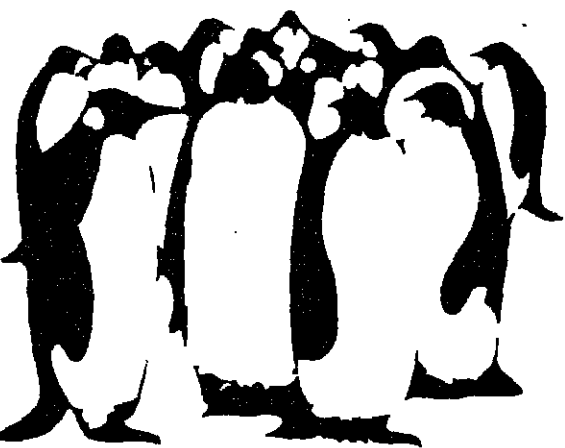
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Lurie's NewsCartoon



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AROUND  
TOWNKLM  
reception  
in Amman

Dutch airline KLM held a reception in the Regency Hotel last week for all the travel and tourism operators in the Kingdom. The event was held to enable tour agents to view the developments and services offered by the airline.



Walking through a world of magic

## Old era finds new form

By Kofi Attah  
Special to The Star

Viewing the work of Sagida Al Mashaeekhi is like walking into a world of magic. The themes of her ceramic works are packed with spirituality, emotions and nostalgia. Her world is a soothing place of dreams reflecting a vanished paradise of her motherland Iraq.

Using ceramics, the artist, who was educated at the Baghdad Academy of Fine Arts, produces whimsically painted Arab bowls.

vases and Islamic pottery. Many of her 38 pieces on display on the ground floor of the Buran Gallery have designs scratched into the glaze. These include abstract animals and Arabic calligraphy.

Her works twist on an age-old Arab-Iraqi tradition.

From a young age, Al Mashaeekhi has been intrigued by the tenacity of the many rich traditions and customs from her cultural past that continue to survive. These very much serve as her hand tools and artistic craft.

While there is an aura of sobriety about her works that reflect the tragedy of modern Iraq,

her art very much dwells on the past.

The first six pieces are about Arabic calligraphy and are painted in such a way as to bring out the prowess of this delicate form of art. The painter is meticulous, carefully inscribing verses of the Koran.

But the richness and dexterity of the painter is soon discovered as she sharply deviates from calligraphic works to human faces.

There is for instance the face of a woman in red, blue and green. The painting spells out the frustration and misery of women in society.

In another painting, there is a face set in a red, blue background with the head serenely tilted. But just as there is this kind of sadness, there is also joy, as portrayed in other works. On one ceramic there is the cheerful face of a woman on a replica of an old Ottoman coin, which was the currency in circulation during the Ottoman period.

But it is soon realized that the painting depicts the face of a woman who is about to get married. The painting sends a visual message that definitely creates drama rather than tells a story. The artist confirms her view with the next painting, entitled "Tisalat" ("communication"). "Every artist has a message to put across," she says.

Besides this theme, overall, the exhibition depicts different situations in Arab society—especially Iraq. In another exhibit an Iraqi umbrella looms wondrously. The artist says that this may symbolize the power of Iraq to protect its citizens.

Al Mashaeekhi, who has been exhibiting her works since 1985, is a very talented artist who is always experimenting with new colors. As she puts her graphic design talent to work, she creates a unique artistic language. Arab calligraphy is very common among modern Arab artists, and it also features prominently in Al Mashaeekhi's work. Her technique of intersecting lines and blending colors creates a special quality that defines the appeal of her exhibition.

At the extreme end of the hall are paintings of space and of nightfall. These are symbols of spirituality and mythology. Most of the other exhibits suggest this combination. Incorporating images and symbols from all

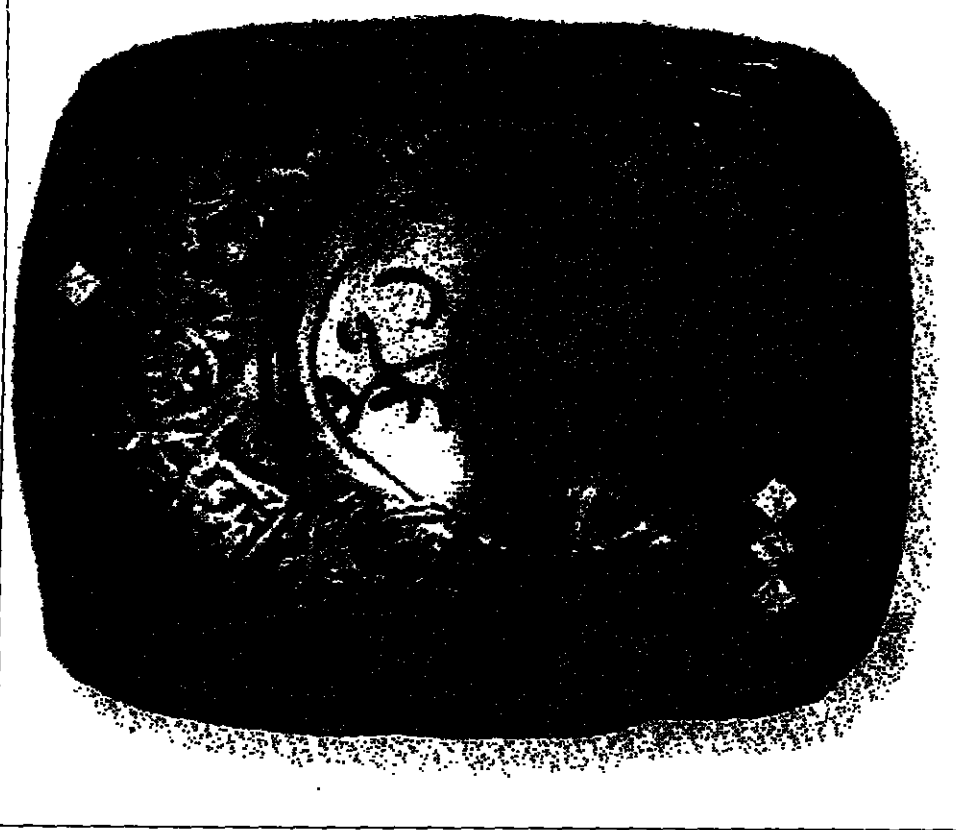


periods of Iraqi and Arab history, she revisits the past and also seems to predict the future.

Her paintings change all the time, touching different themes, revealing not only a love of detail, but the ability to change quickly and completely from one subject to another without losing a general feeling of continuity that holds the exhibit together.

A careful use of color contributes to an arresting quality that distinguishes much of her work. At her exhibition, the visitor can enjoy all the components of painting—image, figure, background and technique.

The show runs through 30 May at the Buran Gallery in Sweifieh. ■

King lays cornerstone  
for Le Royal

AMMAN (Star)—Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor attended, Tuesday, the ceremony for laying the cornerstone of Le Royal Hotel Complex and Tower, near Jabal Amman's Third

Circle, and unveiled the plan to announce the launching of this giant project.

Chairman of General Mediterranean Investment Company, who owns the project, Nazmi Ochi expressed his thanks to the King for his patronage of the venue. He added that his company will be carrying out more investments in Jordan, a country endowed with many potential scientific and human skills. Ochi is a well-known Arab investor who plans to hold giant investment projects in Jordan.

The opening of the project coincides with the Kingdom's celebrations of its Independence Day.

Situated in the heart of Amman,

the complex includes many facilities, such as 300 rooms, a conference hall, a show centre, restaurants, three cinemas, fitness club, indoor and outdoor swimming pools and parking facilities with the capacity for up to 620 cars.

Total cost of the project, Ochi said, is about \$130 million. It will provide nearly 1500 jobs for engineers, technicians and workers during the time it is under construction. When completed, it will create more than 1800 job opportunities.

Ochi seized the event as an opportunity to announce the establishing of a charity fund to support humanitarian and charity institutions in Jordan. He personally donated JD 500,000 for the fund and called on King Hussein to name the fund and sponsor it.

Attending the ceremony also were Prince Zeid Ben Shaker, the Royal Court Chief Fayed Tarawneh, Prime Minister Abdel Salam Majali, Minister of Tourism Akel Beltaji, members of parliament and other dignitaries. ■

Conservatory Orchestra  
to give concert

AS PART of its musical season, the National Music Conservatory/Al Hussein Foundation is organizing a concert by the ever radiant Orchestra of the National Music Conservatory. The concert will be held on Sunday, 31 May at the Royal Cultural Center.

Conducted by Mohammad Othman Sidiq, the Orchestra begins the concert with Rossini's "Barber of Seville", followed by Haydn's "Farewell Symphony". Afterwards, soprano student at the Conservatory, Dima Bawab, sings "The Laughing Song" from "The Bat" by Strauss, followed by Celine Dion's "My Heart



Will Go On," the 1998 Oscar winning soundtrack of the motion picture "Titanic".

The concert ends with the Strauss overture "A Night in Venice". ■



## Halkirk &amp; Le Meridien announce cooperation

HALKIRK INTERNATIONAL, one of Europe's leading marketing companies in the Holiday Ownership & Travel business, is proud to announce the commencement of its operation in conjunction with Le Meridien Hotel in Amman in June.

The directors, M. Eric Smith and Charles Mackenzie, have spent over 20 years in the holiday business and for the past 10 years, one of the main consultants has been with the First National Bank PLC, which is a subsidiary of First National Finance Corp PLC, and presently are in joint-ownership with First National Development Services in Athens, Greece. ■

## THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



Some wolves, their habitat destroyed and overwhelmed by human pressures, turn to snoring quick.



"Man, the Kellermans are bold! ... If it wasn't for our screens, they'd probably walk right in!"

## AGENDA

## Literature Festival

Under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Ministry of Culture and Youth, a group of writers and poets will head up a gathering called "First Literature Festival" beginning May 28 at the headquarters of the Hamdan Charity Society in Marka.

The festival—the first of its kind in Jordan—is organized by an ambitious group who call themselves The Young Writers Family, and comes as a culmination to their successful series of evening gatherings at which poets read their works to the public. The group has been widely lauded, and is a distinctive addition to the Jordanian culture scene.

Poets, writers of short stories, popular verse and folkloric tales from Egypt, Iraq and Jordan are taking part in the all-Arabic venue, which continues until June 3.

## Homage to Federico Garcia Lorca

The Spanish Cultural Center continues its homage to Andalusian poet Garcia Lorca with two films, one musical performance and a video presentation. Schedule as follows:

May 28—"Bodas de sangre" (1938). Original film version of Lorca play. Surreal drama in which a bridegroom and the mysterious "Leonardo"—who has, it seems, an unclear yet intimate fascination with the bride—fight and mortally wound each other in her presence. In Spanish only, at Instituto Cervantes at 5 pm.

May 30—A theatrical performance based on traditional gypsy songs, entitled "Federico Garcia Lorca and Andalusia," at the Royal Cultural Center, 8 pm.

June 4—Showing of a 1984 TV series based on the life of Mariana Pineda, a nineteenth-century Granada-born Spanish nationalist. Scripted by Lorca. In Spanish only, at Instituto Cervantes at 5 pm.

## Films

The American Center (Abdoun), presents a final film with flowers as a theme: May 28—"Stanley and Iris," with Jane Fonda and Robert DeNiro. Film begins at 5 pm.

Darat al Funun's film series on 20th century Latin American artists draws to a close with "The Roaming World of Botero," a film

about Colombian artist Fernando Botero, on May 28 at 6 pm.

## Exhibitions

At Darat al Funun (Jabal al Weibdeh), an exhibit of graphic and oil works on paper by Tunisian artist Guider Triki opens on May 25 at 6 pm. The show, comprising work done between 1973 and 1995, will run until June 26.

Also at Darat al Funun, a new collection of Contemporary Arab Art will be on display until June 25.

An exhibition of materials relating to the work of French architect Christian de Portzamparc continues at the University of Jordan until June 4. Portzamparc's designs have become part of the urban landscape from New York to Paris to Tokyo.

## Lectures

The Goethe Institut presents three lectures in Arabic by Professor Dr Basam Tibi:

June 2—"Islam and the West: Between Struggle and Understanding," at the University of Jordan.

June 3—the same lecture will be presented at the Institute of Diplomacy (Jabal Amman) at 4 pm.

June 4—"Muslim Minorities in the West: Between Isolation and Integration" is presented in cooperation with The Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies, at the World Affairs Council at 6 pm.

## Workshops

A regional workshop (in Arabic) about technical programs and communications for women will take place between June 2 and 8 in the Jerusalem Hotel. Ten Arab countries will take part in the workshop, which is organized by UNESCO and the Muslim Organization for Education, Science and Culture.

A workshop will be held on May 28 at the Society for the Protection of Nature. The one-day event is in preparation for the kick-off of a campaign for the protection of the environment of Jordan, which begins May 31 and will run till the end of the year. The workshop, beginning at 10:30 am and ending at 12 noon, will familiarize the media with the campaign as well as the dangers facing Jordan's environment.



# The Star's GUIDE

Programs on JTV  
from 30 May—5 June

## ENGLISH PROGRAMS

## SATURDAY

3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Johnny Quest  
3:30—I Wanna Be  
4:00—Neighbors  
4:30—Ocean Wilds  
5:00—French Program  
5:00—Acapulco Bay  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—Discovery Magazine  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—You Bet Your Life  
8:00—Cinema, Cinema  
8:30—Prison  
9:10—Sirens  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Feature Film  
12:00—Are You Being Served

## SUNDAY

3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—The Pumpkin Patch  
3:30—The Pink Panther  
3:30—Skippy  
4:00—The American Chart Show  
5:00—In The Wild  
6:00—French Program  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—A Tour in France  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Life's most Embarrassing Moments  
8:00—Taste of Africa  
8:30—Challenges  
9:10—Renegade  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Correlli  
11:10—The Nanny

## MONDAY

3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Fred and Barney Show  
3:30—Raider of the South Pacific  
4:00—Neighbors  
4:30—Last Frontiers  
5:00—French Program  
7:00—News in French



NBA Games, Thursday at 5:00 pm.

7:15—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Hope and Gloria  
8:00—Perspective  
9:10—99-1 "Stone"  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Law and Order  
11:10—Bay Watch Nights

**TUESDAY**  
3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Pro Star

3:30—Small Talk  
4:00—Bordertown  
4:30—The Health Show  
5:00—Route of Capricorn  
6:00—French Program  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Step by Step  
8:00—What would you do  
8:30—Rhodes  
10:00—News At Ten

## Amman cinemas

● Philadelphia I (Tel: 4634149):  
The Jackal  
● Philadelphia II (Tel: 4634149):  
Liar-Liar  
● Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): The Mirror Has Two The  
The Preacher's Wife / Titanic  
● Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): Shadow Conspiracy  
● Plaza (Tel: 5699238): Titanic  
● Concord I (Tel: 5677420): The Relic  
● Concord II (Tel: 5677420): Kamana (Arabic)

## 10:30—Feature Film

12:00—Metro Café

## WEDNESDAY

3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Mr Bogus Show  
3:30—Castle of Adventure  
4:00—The Album Show  
5:00—French Program  
6:00—Acapulco Bay  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Buddies  
8:00—Envoy Special  
9:10—Kung Fu  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Nutcracker (Mini Series)

## THURSDAY

3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Dinky Dis  
3:30—The Animal Park  
4:00—French Programs  
4:30—Blue Water Dreaming  
5:00—NBA Games  
6:00—Slider  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Big Brother Jake  
8:00—Great Romance  
8:30—Dr Quinn, The Medicine Woman  
9:10—The Oprah Winfrey Show  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Feature Film  
12:00—Can't Hurry Love

## FRIDAY

3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Eddy Ruxpin  
3:30—Wishbone  
4:00—He Shoots, He Scores  
4:30—Tazman  
5:30—The French Program  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Program

## 7:30—News Headlines

7:35—The Fresh Prince of Bel Air

8:00—Life on the Internet

8:30—The Brain "Evolution"

9:10—Babylon-5

10:00—News At Ten

10:30—Melissa (Mini Series)

## PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS

## SAMEDI

17:00—Faut pas rêver

19:00—Le Journal

19:15—Magazine

L'auf de Colomb

## DIMANCHE

18:00—Bonne espérance

19:00—Le Journal

19:15—E=M6

## LUNDI

17:00—Thalassa

19:00—Le Journal

19:15—Cinq sur Cinq

## MARDI

18:00—Les cœurs brûlés (5)

19:00—Le Journal

19:15—Fractales

## MERCREDI

17:00—Ushuaia

19:00—Le Journal

19:15—E=M6

## JEUDI

16:10—L'école des fans

19:00—Le Journal

19:15—Atomes crochus

## VENDREDI

17:30—Fort Boyard

19:00—Le Journal

19:15—Allé la Terre

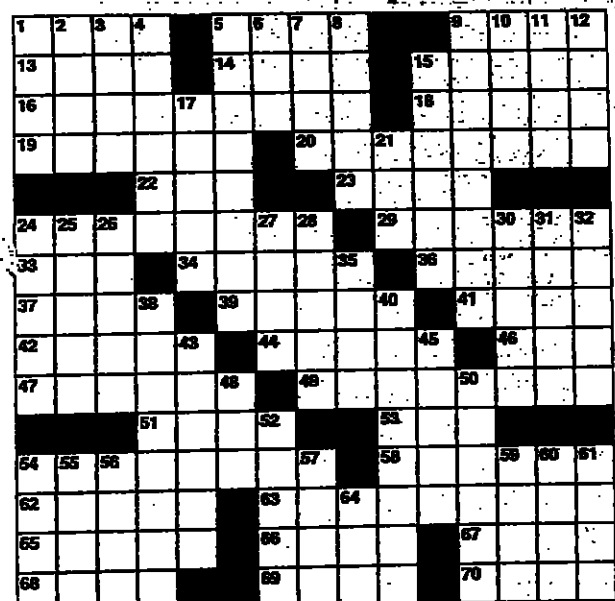
Programs are subject to change by JTV

## MUSIC AWARDS



**Mariah Carey in Monaco for the World Music Awards which was held on 6 May. She has received two achievements' awards**

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



**ACROSS**  
1 Hold away  
2 Shut with force  
3 Pulled the trigger  
4 Uncovered  
5 Sly artifice  
6 Shear linen  
7 Play down  
8 Bed  
9 Whole  
10 Answer to a problem  
11 Nickname of 82D  
12 Mess, as profit  
13 Hermit  
14 Rely (upon)  
15 A certain degree  
16 Bomber  
17 Gay  
18 Deep grief  
19 Sounding and place  
20 Meddles and lounge  
21 Retired  
22 Skull point  
23 Spectral  
24 Held a pick and shovel  
25 Compare views  
26 Curs-alls  
27 Band instrument  
28 Anger  
29 Bed linen material  
30 Long, narrow  
31 Chili con...  
32 Tender  
33 Conducted  
34 Author  
35 Fairly tale  
36 US author, James  
37 Rude  
38 Fouldest designation and place  
39 Was defeated  
40 American Beauty, for

**DOWN**  
1 American Beauty, for  
2 Alp  
3 Departed  
4 Envelope  
5 All embracing  
6 Pot cover  
7 Poor mal  
8 Vine in bud  
9 Vulnerable point  
10 Stereo  
11 Seed spread  
12 Gull-like bird  
13 Enslaved  
14 Conducted  
15 Provoked  
16 Inquisitive  
17 Conducted  
18 Elit of foolish behavior  
19 Worker in a room  
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Darjeeling hybrids still tingle taste buds

# Tracking the perfect tea leaf

By Giles MacDonald

DARJEELING TEA is offered two opportunities to excel. They are called the first and second "flushes." The first occurs with the first spring growth after the snows melt in the foothills of the Himalayas. Then the chiefly Nepalese women pluckers go out with their baskets and pick off two leaves and a bud from the re-emerging bush. The second flush takes place in the early summer, once the plant has grown again. For the rest of the year they pick poor-grade "monsoon tea."

Both the first and the second flushes have their partisans. The Germans and the Japanese, who control the markets for the best quality Darjeeling teas, favour the first flush; the British, in the days when they expressed a strong opinion in these matters, tended to prefer the second. The first is more angular, sharper and sinewy; the second fuller and comparatively mellow. I arrived in Darjeeling at the end of March. *El Niño* had been flexing its muscles in the Himalayas too. It had been uncharacteristically cold and wet. Only with my arrival did the sun finally emerge, and showed every intention of wanting to stay.

The melodiously named Arya estate is just below the teeming, sprawling town of Darjeeling. With Happy Valley next door (which sounds distinctly like a lunatic asylum), Arya is one of the highest gardens in the region, with bushes peaking at 6,200 feet—around 1,900 meters. That is promising in itself: the rule is, the higher the tea, the greater the delicacy, the lower it is, the fuller the body.

My sanginity, however, was eliminated on the journey down: there must be better roads in hell. Once or twice I even had to get out of the car to prevent it sliding off into a ravine or cess-pit. By the time I reached the garden I was a wreck.

Darjeeling tea-gardens enjoy

reputations like wine estates, and like them they often retain their good names long after they deserve. As I came up from the plains I noted the rather tatty, sparse bushes in the two which enjoy the greatest fame: Saint Margaret's Hope and Castleton. Arya has no such name, yet I could see instantly, or as soon as my legs ceased to shake, that the current team was taking immense care. A tea garden in Darjeeling rarely makes money these

owner was not expecting much of a profit, but he wanted the best.

With quality in mind, he had given instructions to his young team to improve the tea in the garden itself, so that you see none of that gappy scruffiness which marks out some better known estates. He has invested 7 million rupees, more than £100,000. In the estate and factory too, and put down new China clones producing superbly aromatic teas.

Bannockburn estate has a name which should

burn, but rising a little higher to 6,000 feet above sea level. There is as much as a third Assam here, but the manager isolates the different hybrids, China, Assam and Clonal, and makes three very different styles of tea. The new clones are impressive again. The unappealingly named P312 makes light, scented teas with a whiff of lemon and oenot.

Good tea is too cheap. The manager at Photoeser told me that one of his first flushes sold for 3,000 rupees (£45) a kilo at a Calcutta auction this year but that it had cost him half that much to produce. Even at prices like these a pot of tea does not work out dear, still less than a bottle of cola.

I discussed the problems of Darjeeling tea with Ranjan Dutta, the genial former army officer who runs the Planters' Association. He tapped his pipe and smiled. Higher yields were the answer: not necessarily bigger producing clones, but more bushes to the hectare. I thought of the tightly packed garden at Arya, then of some of the more randomly planted gardens I had seen. His was the long view. The 1960s with their endless political wrangles had been much worse. "In 150 years only three gardens have become extinct."

Let us take a deep breath. This is an American book, first published in the United States. In a few weeks in Britain, some Europeans adopt an attitude of lofty disdain for works emanating from the western side of the Atlantic. Their minds are so infused with images of the super-republic at its worst that they fail to see the best in it. Fortunately, you and I are aware that the American intelligentsia is in most respects superior to its old-world counterpart.

We know about illiteracy in the capitals of capitalism, but Professor Cowen tells us, the wealthiest and most commercial countries are "by and large, also the most literate."

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days—the production costs are too high. A kilo of tea requires around 150 rupees. A paltry £2.30 may not sound like a king's ransom, but it is worth a lot more in India. Since the Gurkhaland independence movement a few years ago, the garden workers are well organized. Some people maintain that they will finish by closing Darjeeling. A handful of estates have already closed shop.

Many garden-owners run their Darjeeling estates as loss leaders, others have them for their prestige value—a little like racehorses in the west. I was assured that Arya's new

endeavour it to the Scots: they could serve it as the house Darjeeling in their steep slope, rising to 5,500 feet.

Here and there you spot the thick trunks of the Assam bush, which tends to produce darker, coarser teas in Darjeeling. Like Arya, however, Bannockburn is engaged in a planting programme.

The new clones have been chosen for their potential quality, and not, as so often was the case in the past, for their higher yields.

Photoeser is under the same ownership as Bannock-

# Capitalism a boon to culture, creativity

By Joe Rogaly

CAPITALISM IS the death of culture, isn't it? Commerce dulls our artistic sensibilities. Not so, it seems. Capitalism cancels culture. Money corrupts the creative mind. The mass market for the arts is a machine managed by mammon for the mulching of morons. Corporations cream their coffers with cash from crap.

Such are the cigar-smoke-induced opinions of those of us who at best mistrust the liberal market economy and at worst believe it to be the messenger of doom. Hollywood is a pusher, marketing the opium of the people. The tabloids are blotting us out. Science and technology have been developed to the highest degree, but when it comes to our artistic sensibilities we are in the darkest of ages.

I could continue along such lines, spinning gloomy word-bubbles, as we all could on this subject, could we not? But I have been doused with cold water, and by an economist at that. A new book, *In Praise of Commercial Culture* (Harvard University Press), proclaims that a thriving capitalist society sustains the arts better than any other form of social organization.

Its author, Tyler Cowen, is professor of economics at George Mason University in Virginia. He concedes that television does not provide much support for cultural optimists, but argues persuasively that literature, western art, and music "from Bach to the Beatles" flourish best when businesses are profitable and opportunities for innovative artists to find customers are multiplied.

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Take the United States. Between 1947 and 1996, the list of titles in print rose from 85,000 to 1.3 million. The number of publishers increased, he says, from 357 to 49,000-plus. There are ten times as many book shops as there were 50 years ago. In the print super-markets of today, best-sellers, mostly low culture, account for a mere three percent of sales.

As to the fine arts, the Renaissance was the product of a commercial revolution. Most of the prominent painters and sculptors of Florence were initially goldsmiths or their pupils. Michelangelo could name his terms to buyers who were customers rather than patrons.

The cult of enjoyment and gratification encouraged artistic activity. The decline began, we are informed, when Florence lost its position of relative economic supremacy.

The Dutch and Flemish masters, and later the French impressionists, applied their brush strokes within flourishing capitalist cultures of wealth and conspicuous consumption. Central authorities, be they the later

Medicis or the French Salon, usually support bland mediocrities.

How about music, then? Surely, we cultural conservatives can admit the sheer quantity of recordings, concerts, and broadcasts provides something for every taste, including what to me is the incomprehensible dissonance inflicted on us by certain modern composers.

So many performers have made recordings of familiar older works, the ones we all agree are classics, that there is a glut on the market. The works of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven reach more people, sitting in greater comfort, than in the composers' lifetimes.

These glories of the past cannot be repeated. "The 20th century has seen world musical leadership switch from the German lands to the New World," says our professor. The blues, gospel, jazz, rock and roll, and their offshoots, all with roots in Afro-America, enrich global culture for us all.

I remain to be convinced that the same can honestly be said of rap. But when he says that contemporary popular

music "encourages freedom, non-conformism, and a skeptical attitude towards authority, we might concur."

That is not the reason why Britain's new Labour administration seems so comfortable in the company of pop artists. Low culture is attractive to more voters than, say, the theatre or the opera. Supporting such higher art forms with taxpayers' money is always difficult to justify. Chris Smith might see pop as the most productive segment of what he, as minister of culture, regards as the creative-industry sector of the economy.

As with the debate in the US over the National Endowment for the Arts, the row over Britain's Arts Council never goes away. The belief is that high culture would fade away if state subsidies were withdrawn. We are unwilling to place our cultural bets on the finer impulses of the super-rich. We prefer, irrationally, to leave it to officials to decide who is worthy. Creative capitalism does it better.

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By Christian Tyler

ONCE, DYING was all too easy. Now, it is beginning to look too difficult. The World Health Organization (WHO) celebrated its 50th birthday last week with the news that life expectancy worldwide, currently standing at 68, will rise to 73 at the end of the first quarter of the next century. By then, people in rich countries such as Britain can hope to live to 80. Medical experts are predicting even greater average life spans for the US, of 95 or even 100 by the year 2050. Some scientists think 140 is achievable.

Meanwhile, infant mortality has been so reduced that, for the first time in history, death is something which happens mainly to the old. As Peter Laslett, a social historian at Trinity College, Cambridge, and an octogenarian himself, said this week: "It is people like me who are doing all the dying for the rest of society."

Not all of us get our entitlement. A man named Herbie died last year in Ireland of stomach cancer at the age of 63. He achieved posthumous fame by agreeing to let the makers of a television series film his last hours. His death will be broadcast in the final episode of a BBC1 series called "The Human Body" which began this Wednesday.

Herbie's intention, according to the BBC, was to show that it is still possible to die with dignity, unafraid, and in your own bed. Answering complaints that to film Herbie's death was itself an affront to human dignity, a spokeswoman said the series would have been "incomplete" without it. "We are showing that death is a natural part of life."

And so it is. Yet dying is difficult. Not only does it come ever later, but it is often physically arduous and psychologically disturbing, a mystery hard to contemplate. It can be ugly and messy; and although fictional deaths glamorized for film and television seem ever more popular, the real thing has been swept out of public view.

In advanced societies, fewer people know, or care to know, how to deal with it. The untrained women in every street or village who used to "lay out" the dead and comfort the living have been superseded; in 1993, only a fifth of people in England and Wales died in their own houses.

Newspaper and magazine articles usually concern the tragic deaths of children, or of talented people cut off prematurely. They are about the suffering of the living, not about the people who are doing most of the dying: the old.

Nobody dies of old age any more, at least not according to the official statistics. No wonder, then, that as more people count on living beyond their Biblical allotment of three score and ten, so more are worried about what kind of death to expect. They want to enjoy a natural death (whatever that means), to die when they are ready, and to be present, so to speak, when it happens.

# The end of death

The news from the WHO looks good. But will the extra years be worth having? The economic cost alone of our predicted longevity is alarming. Finance ministers around the world, for something like half of all the state money spent on the health of citizens is consumed in the last year of their lives. More worry to the individual is whether the price of longevity will turn out to be long years of illness—the gift of immortality without the gift of eternal youth?

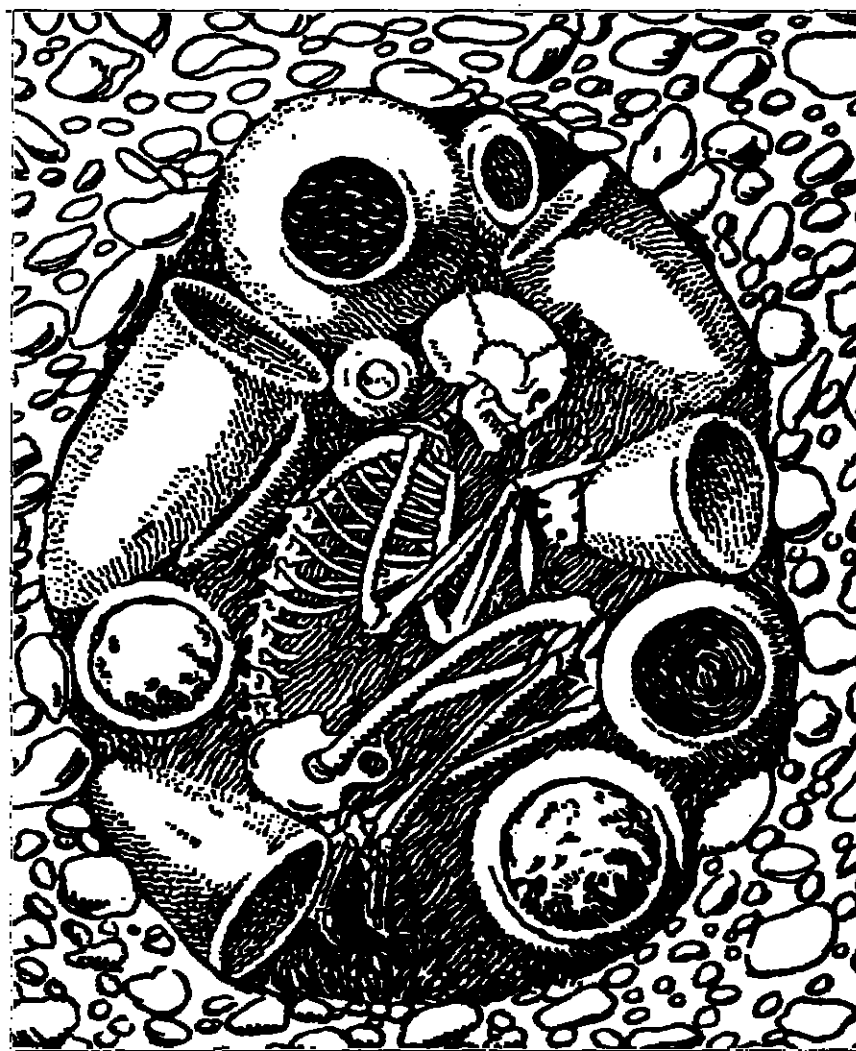
People used to tear the pain associated with death. Michel de Montaigne, the French essayist whose observations on this topic are as pertinent today as they were when he wrote them in the late 16th century, confessed to being obsessed by it. These days, we are more likely to be afraid not of pain, but of a futile prolongation of life by high-tech medical intervention. Montaigne quotes Lucretius: "Why seek to gain more, just to lose it again, wretchedly, without joy?"

Although humans cling tenaciously to life—which is why death can be physically so difficult—it is not usually the old who insist on the full panoply of medical treatment. Dr Nick Conti, who has just retired as consultant geriatrician at Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge, has watched many people die. He said the old tend to underestimate what can be done for them. Although doctors sometimes try to do too much, "it is very often the relatives who insist on the full works. They may have not done much for many years, then they swoop in and say, 'I'm here to see that everything possible is done.'"

American research shows that the amount of treatment given to the dying depends not on their symptoms but on where in the US they happen to live.

Doctors are torn between conflicting objectives, according to Sherwin Nuland, a Yale professor whose book *How We Die* was a best-seller: they are torn between doing what is best for their patients, and conquering illness in order to prolong life. It is the difference between the family doctor (in a hospital context, the geriatrician) and the specialist.

Nuland himself persuaded a 92-year-old woman in his care to have an operation which he judged she was able to tolerate. When it turned out more complicated than expected, she rightly felt betrayed. And she died shortly afterwards of something else. Yet, says Nuland, although he learned a lesson, the clinical decision was probably correct.



Death belongs properly to the dying, not to the doctors or the relatives. Even so, the question whether to intervene medically is not a simple one. Much depends on whether the aging process can in practice be distinguished from disease (dementia of the Alzheimer type can occur in quite young people), and here opinion is divided. Many afflictions normally associated with the old can in fact be treated, and new surgical techniques make intervention less traumatic. Treatment late in life may not only be worthwhile, but actually cost-saving.

Aging is a fact, and the idea of dying

from old age is attractive, says Raymond Tallis, professor of geriatric medicine at the Hope Hospital in Salford: the idea is of a "gradual but harmonious failure of all organs." But is it realistic? And would death by old age be an improvement?

Despite suspicions to the contrary, hospitals try to do what patients want, and what will work, according to Professor Iona Higgins, a specialist in palliative care working at St Christopher's hospice in south London. If some patients are treated too intensively, that is only because doctors do not know accurately enough in advance what will work.

The modern hospice movement started in Britain with the aim of providing a friendly death for the terminally ill—especially those with cancer, motor neurone disease and, latterly, AIDS. It aims to look after the whole person (and the family) while using sophisticated methods of pain control.

St Christopher's has expanded outwards to look after a wider range of patients, including those in hospital and those still living at home. To that extent it is reviving, in a more institutional and professional way, some of the ideas of how dying should be done.

Not surprisingly, in view of their religious origins, hospices seem to be reintroducing the kind of psychological framework for death, formerly supplied by a belief in an after-life. When everybody believed in life after death, in reward and punishment, in the wisdom of a divine dispensation, when dying was normal and when its rituals were determined by the clergy, death was perhaps more acceptable, if no less terrible.

People were taught to live as if each day were their last, to see death round every corner. Today, it is something to be ignored for as long as it can be, and circumvented if possible. Perhaps because of this loss of religious faith, families are spending less than they did on funerals, and richer families are spending less than poorer. "No society ever existed which rejected death more absolutely than ours," says Peter Laslett.

A fashionably nostalgic—and typically "green"—version of death is promoted by the Natural Death Centre, which publishes a "good funeral guide" and directs people towards woodland burial grounds and cardboard coffins (ecologically sounder than cremation with mahogany). Started by three psychotherapists, it can be seen as a successor to the natural childbirth movement which prospered in the 1970s: it advises on how to care for someone dying at home.

Urbanization, smaller families, mobility, have all conspired against the home death. Nicholas Albery, one of the founders, explained that even with the best of intentions, families may lose their nerve as the end approaches, and ring for the ambulance. He added that for those who have accepted death as inevitable, it is easier to die at home than in a hospital ward: like Hindus, they can simply stop eating.

Others have reacted to the supposed perils of hospital over-treatment by giving directions in advance: The so-called living

will is not as popular in Britain as it is in the US (where perhaps it may be more necessary). Although comforting for the person whose signature is on it, the living will is not infallible. Doctors point out that it is impossible to forecast all the circumstances (or even to make sure the will is at hand at the moment of crisis), and theologians worry about the moral consequences of instructions that could amount to attempted suicide.

Living wills are actively encouraged by euthanasiaists. But if longevity is a problem—and it is a big "if"—euthanasia is not an answer, even if the moral and practical objections to it could be overcome. For only in very few cases does the question of assisted suicide arise.

Other solutions might include rationing of treatment for the old—the concept of the "fair innings"—or, perhaps in the distant future, some genetic manipulation which will programme a self-by date into each new-born child.

Or perhaps, modifying the Titanic principle and exploiting their appetite for hang-gliding and bungee-jumping, old people could be offered hazardous jobs, as nuclear power station attendants and motorcycle couriers.

It probably won't be necessary. For the same WHO report which promises longevity eventually even to poorer countries also talks about "health expectancy." Here too, the news is increase in life expectancy unaccompanied by an increase in the time spent with severe disability. In other words, the quality of life appears to be keeping pace with the quantity.

Furthermore, doctors report that medicine is making inroads into the disabilities of the old, such as blindness, deafness, immobility and stroke, and killers such as heart disease. Cancer and dementia may eventually yield to the assault of research. Even the costs of treating the old may decline in relative terms as knowledge expands.

Contrary to popular opinion, says Raymond Tallis, longer life is not inevitably going to be purchased at the cost of extra suffering or "unacceptable pressure on the public purse."

So the real problem of longevity is that there will be a lot of fit old people about. And it will be up to them to make the plans, find the jobs, invent the projects which will make life worth living. In that world, attitude will be everything.

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# The Star Stadium

Edited by Abdul-Hamid Adzasi

## Nigerian striker Amokachi powerful beyond his years

PARIS—At only 25, Daniel Amokachi has achieved his own fair share of soccer glory. He was capped at senior international level at the tender age of 17. He won an Olympic soccer gold medal at US '94, he netted two goals to propel the Eagles to the second round in only their debut appearance at the big stage. And with top European clubs like Club Brugge (Belgium), Everton (England) and Besiktas (Turkey), he has annexed major honours. "I'm a different soul," Amokachi simply says of his outstanding record.

The striker comes with an assertive, very confident personality both on and off the pitch. That may explain why he is widely regarded as the leader of the "Super Eagles" even in a star-studded team with older and more experienced players. His four goals in the France '98 qualifying series have further enhanced his rising profile and fetched him product endorsement and modelling



Nigerian Amokachi hops over opponent

team. "I'm not part of the mafia (the tag ascribed to the powerful clique). I'm only one of the most capped players in the team and it is only normal that when decisions regarding the team are to be taken, I'm often involved," maintains Amokachi.

But he has no apologies for dumping the more competitive English Premiership and leaving Everton for Turkey. "I'm playing football for the money. I'm not playing this game for exposure. I've a family to look after, two big boys, a wife, whose future I have to worry about."

In April, Amokachi partly justified the huge investment Besiktas has made on him by helping them to the Turkish Cup. But the hard-running striker still hopes to head back eventually to mainstream Europe to continue his pro career. And if he can match his US '94 exploits in France, Europe's biggest guns might well start queuing up for his services.

## US squad stands to gain from firing of Iran coach

By Grahame L. Jones

FOR US national team coach Steve Sampson, what happened in Rome and Amsterdam last week was every bit as important as what happens in Portland, Oregon, where the US played Kuwait Sunday. Because in Rome, the less famous of the city's two Serie A teams, AS Roma, as opposed to Lazio, thrashed Iran's World Cup team, 7-1, on Tuesday. The tremor set off by that demolition was felt all the way back in Tehran, where embarrassment and anger was so keen that it cost Tomislav Ivic, Iran's Croatian coach, his job within a matter of hours.

Not many countries would be willing to oust their coach a mere three weeks before beginning a grueling World Cup campaign, but Ivic was sent packing and was replaced by assistant Jalal Talebi.

"Under Ivic, the national soccer team was rapidly approaching a dead end," one team official said. Iran will play its first World Cup game in 20 years on June 14, against Yugoslavia in Saint-Gilles, France. It then will play the United States on June 25 in Lyon, before closing the first round against Germany in Paris

on June 26. The "dead end" that Ivic supposedly was approaching might look like a highway to the stars by the time those three games are over. Certainly, the turmoil caused by this late change of coaches will benefit the US.

All the same, Sampson does not believe Iran made a wise move. "Obviously, they're trying to make a statement," he said. "I've never seen a decision like this at this late date. The results of it seem unlikely to be positive. Maybe I'm wrong. But to my knowledge, even though they had a poor result against Roma, I think he (Ivic) knew where he was going with this team. Two of their most prolific players were missing in the match: Mohammed Azizi and Ali Daei. Those two players make a big difference."

"These are things that happen in that part of the world, and we've grown to kind of expect these kinds of decisions. Only the Iranian (soccer) federation knows what's best for them, given the state of mind of their players and what the public wants in their team."

"You have to respect the



US Coach Steve Sampson

decision, but I question whether it will be of help to them so close to the World Cup." Asked whether he had watched Wednesday's European Champions' Cup Final between Real Madrid and Juventus in Amsterdam, Sampson replied: "I sure did. The whole team watched it." Given that, what was Sampson's impression of Predrag Mijatovic, the Yugoslav striker who scored the game's only goal to give the Spanish team its first European championship in 32 years?

"I thought he played an excellent match," Sampson said. "I

## Mijatovic's star on the rise

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia — Predrag Mijatovic has trophies from his native Yugoslavia, the Spanish first division, even the shine at the World European Champions Cup. He has starred in just about everything, but there is something much bigger. "I have accumulated a lot of experience while playing many important matches for my club," said the 29-year-old Mijatovic, who plays for Real Madrid in Spain. "But the World Cup is something else, a special gathering which can hurry or launch players to the stars. I want to shine." Last year, Mijatovic was generally considered the second-best player in Europe after Brazilian star Ronaldo.

In mid-May, his lone goal gave Real a 1-0 victory over Juventus and the European Champions Cup. Mijatovic is the key to Yugoslavia's initial ambitions to get past Group F, consisting of Germany, the United States and Iran, and advance to the second round. Despite his age, this will be Mijatovic's first World Cup. Yugoslavia was banned from qualifying for the 1994 tournament in the



Mijatovic struts his stuff

United States because of United Nations sanctions imposed on Serbia for fomenting the Bosnian war. "This is my first and probably the last chance to play a major role at the World Cup. I don't want to miss it," said Mijatovic, who scored 15 goals during 1996 Yugoslav qualifying for France '98.

After finishing second behind Spain in European Group 6, Yugoslavia was forced into a two-leg playoff with Hungary which it either had to win, or miss out again on the World Cup. Mijatovic scored seven of 12 Yugoslav goals and sent his nation to the show.

Before joining Real Madrid two seasons ago, Mijatovic played for Partizan Belgrade and Valencia in Spain, scoring 55 goals in three seasons. He first started as a midfielder, but as his career progressed to one of the best-paid players in the world, he was moved closer to the goal.

Can Yugoslavia make the final? "In the penalty area I feel completely at home," said Mijatovic, known for his technical skills and aggressive style. He also has been praised for his ballcontrol, often assisting his teammates in scoring goals, and is dangerous with free kicks from the edge of the area. Last month, he suffered a serious calf muscle injury that sidelined him for more than two weeks. His lack of fitness after the injury could be a major problem for the Yugoslav team in France.

## Saudis' Brazilian master teaches England's Huddle lesson in draw

LONDON—England coach Glenn Huddlestone woke up Sunday to a hostile British press who slammed his team's performance in their four and scrappy goalless draw against Saudi Arabia at Wembley on Saturday. There was not a favorable headline to be found in the nation's newspapers after England's worst performance since Huddle took charge 22 months ago.

England, which might have lost had the Saudis shown greater composure in front of goal, were uncertain in defense, sloppy in midfield and lacked the killer touch in attack.

Saudi Arabia is a 125-1 rank outsider to win the World Cup but Huddle admitted he has something to learn from the methods of his coach, Brazilian Carlos Alberto Parreira.

Parreira, who steered Brazil to World Cup glory in US '94, was originally vilified in his native land when he sacrificed traditional style for a more pragmatic approach. "Parreira won the World Cup with Brazil," pointed out Huddle, who leaves with his 29 remaining players for the pre-France training camp in Spain and final warm-up games against Morocco and Belgium on Monday.

"They've gone 20 years but he did it with a team with two players who could do the defensive job in midfield, Mauro Silva and Dunga. He knew he had to get organized defensively to win the World Cup because that's the way the game's gone, squeezing tight, far more organized. "Brazil won the World Cup like that. Germany won Euro '96 with Dieter Eklund. And the times when we've played with Batty and Paul lace like that. Georgia, Poland and Russia: it's been very difficult to break us down."

Huddle admitted that tightness had been missing against the lightweight but well-organized Saudis, the idea of allowing David Beckham and Paul Scholes to "slide off" around Batty not working. With workrate down, England could not pressure the ball in the important central area, meaning it was harking from so deep the Saudis had time to retreat in numbers. And in addition, the



Huddle still big on Brit WC chances

midfielders were unwilling to track back, leaving Tony Adams, Gareth Southgate and Gary Neville exposed to Saudi counters at the back.

"We weren't really giving it the 100 percent gun defensively," conceded Huddle. "There was a lack of assertiveness. We didn't come alive when they had the ball at all. In a friendly you sometimes don't want to put the defensive work in. There were too many times when the back three were left on one. When lace and Batty are in there, that doesn't happen. They shut the corridor between the midfield and the back players and make us much tighter."

Fear of picking up a World Cup-wrecking injury was another element in the sub-par showing, agreed Huddle, as was a lack of competitive incisiveness that saw England's chances go begging. Substitutes Ian Wright, Les Ferdinand and Paul Gascoigne, with a fierce 30-yard drive all might have stolen it late-on but the blank scoreboard saw an almost apologetic feel to the "top of appreciation" to the Wembley fans. "We didn't have the cutting edge in the last third we hope we'll have in France, when we'll go in all guns blazing," said Huddle.



## Foe felled midfield by fractured femur

■ NORCIA, Italy—Marc Foe, key midfielder of Cameroon's World Cup team, broke his left leg during a training session and is out of the tournament. Foe, who played with Lens in the French league this year, is undergoing treatment in France. He was injured Saturday. Foe, who debuted with Cameroon in the 1994 World Cup, was being sought by Manchester United for next season.

## Japan checks Czechs

■ TOKYO—Using the man-to-man defense it has been polishing for its first World Cup game against Argentina, Japan held the Czech Republic to a scoreless tie Sunday. "I think we can go with this defense," coach Takeshi Okada said after the game, played before a crowd of 67,000 at the International Stadium Yokohama.

## Italy bans trade plans during Cup tourney

■ FLORENCE, Italy—Players in Italy's World Cup team won't be traded by clubs during the soccer tournament in France.

National team officials said Sunday that the ban on transfer negotiations for the duration of the World Cup was intended to avoid undue inconveniences to their concentration. Some stars, such as Roberto Baggio, Dino Baggio, Angelo Di Livio and Alessandro Costacurta, may change clubs next season.



## Renewed Anderton ready to join England

■ LONDON—After barely playing for Tottenham during the past two seasons, injury-prone wing Darren Anderton was delighted to have lasted 90 minutes for England.

Because of a nagging groin injury, Anderton played only 14 games last season and didn't make any regular appearances until the final five games of this season. "The big thing is that I have got 90 minutes under my belt for England and, although it was difficult, the important thing was that I did it," said Anderton, who now has to convince coach Glenn Huddle he's worth taking to the World Cup.

Saturday's appearance in a 0-0 tie against Saudi Arabia was Anderton's 17th for England, but his first since the European Championship semifinal. "I'm not kidding myself. I'd not played an international for two years," Anderton said. "I feel fit and I've played five games now although I'm not sure about my form."

## New Iran coach in debut win over Inter

■ COMO, Italy—Sparked by a new coach and by two goals by forward Ali Daei, Iran beat UEFA Cup champion Internazionale 4-1.

day in an exhibition game. In its first game since Jalal Talebi replaced Tomislav Ivic as coach on, Iran fell behind when Uruguay forward Alvaro Recoba scored in the 41st minute. Kian did the score in the 71st minute, and Daei, newly signed by Bayern Munich, scored twice in a three-minute span. Karim Bagheri, connected with one minute remaining.

Inter, which finished second in the Italian League, was missing many key players who are with their national teams, including Taribo West of Nigeria, Italian sweeper Giuseppe Bergomi and Javier Zanetti.

## Brazilian coach irked by his own salary

■ KINGSTON, Jamaica—Rene Simoes, the Brazilian soccer coach who led Jamaica to its first World Cup appearance, stunned the island's soccer officials by saying he will quit in October.

Simoes said he was angry because a newspaper reported his \$220,000 salary last week. His salary is paid by private companies sponsoring the team. "To print my salary was in poor taste," the 45-year-old Simoes said.

## Ba, Anelka 'get the boot' from Jacques

■ CLAIREFONTAINE, France—AC Milan's Ibrahim Ba, and Arsenal teenager Nicolas Anelka were among six players cut Saturday as France coach Aimé Jacquet picked his World Cup roster. Jacques's 22-man roster included seven from the Italian League, four from Germany's Premier League, one from Spain, one from Germany and nine home-based players.

The roster: Goalkeepers: Fabien Barthez (AS Monaco), Bernard Lama (West Ham, England), Lionel Charbonnier (Auxerre).

Defenders: Laurent Blanc (Olympique Marseille), Vincent Candela (AS Roma, Italy), Marcel Desailly (AC Milan, Italy), Franck Leboeuf (Chelsea, England), Lilian Thuram (Parma, Italy), Alain Boghossian (Sampdoria of Genoa, Italy), Bixente Lizarazu (Bayern Munich, Germany).

Midfielders: Didier Deschamps (Juventus of Turin, Italy), Christian Karembeu (Real Madrid, Spain), Emmanuel Petit (Arsenal, England), Patrick Vieira (Arsenal, England), Zinedine Zidane (Juventus of Turin, Italy), Younès Djorkaroff (Internazionale of Milan, Italy).

Forwards: Bernard Diomède (Auxerre), Christophe Dugarry (Olympique Marseille), Stéphane Guivarch (Auxerre), Thierry Henry (AS Monaco), Robert Pirès (Metz), David Trezeguet (AS Monaco).



## Mondial 'friendlies' scoreboard

- AS Roma 7, Iran 1
- S Korea 2, Jamaica 1
- S Korea 0, Jamaica 0
- Argentina 1, Chile 0
- Norway 5, Mexico 2
- Saudi Arabia 0, England 0
- Mexico 0, Ireland 0
- Colombia 2, Scotland 2
- Montpellier 3, Morocco 0
- Chile 2, Uruguay 2



## Princes of desert set to 'win it all'

AS ONE of Asia's two representatives in the World Cup in the USA in 1994, triple Asian Cup holders Saudi Arabia will go into the World Cup France '98 as a favorite. The Saudis reached the second round of the World Cup in 1994, losing to eventual semi-finalist Sweden, and they will be keen to play on the global stage once again.

Things had not looked good for Saudi Arabia prior to the Asian Cup last year but a coaching change saw Portugal's Eduardo Vinhada take over and their fortunes took a turn for the better.

A penalty shoot-out victory over the United

Arab Emirates gave the Saudis a record-equalling third Asian Cup in their fourth successive final last December. They then went on to qualify from Group One of the World Cup qualifying round first stage with ease against Bangladesh, Malaysia and Chinese Taipei.

In 1994, in their first appearance at a World Cup final round, they caused a sensation by finishing top of a group that included Belgium and the Netherlands. They went on to win the Asia Cup in 1996 and so their qualification for the next World Cup was not such a surprise and the mood at home is not as euphoric as it was four years ago.

A good part of the credit for their renewed success must go to German "Football developer" Otto Pfister, who took over as coach of the Saudis at the beginning of 1997 and steered them through the first round of qualifying matches into the second, where they earned a direct qualification place.

But the team's lack of consistency and some glaring weaknesses in defence were probably the factors that led to the association's decision to release Pfister and replace him with one of the world's best known coaches, Carlos Alberto Parreira, the man who led Brazil to the world title in 1994. He will have noted quickly that in terms of technique and speed his new squad can be compared with the best, but that in scoring goals they are in dire need of



improvement. Against non-Asian teams in the FIFA Confederations Cup they scored just one goal in three games, making their weakness obvious for all to see.

While Saeed Owairan, their best striker in 1994, is back on the team, he seems to be far from top form. Potential great performances from goalie Ali Daei and prime mover Hussein Abdelghani will hardly be enough to see them do a repeat of their performance in the heat of Florida and get them through in a group that includes the host country, Denmark and South Africa.

Probable Squad Player (Club): Mohammed al Daeiye (Taei,

Mohammed al Khilawi (Itihad), Ahmed Jamil Madani (Itihad), Abdullah Zebramawi (Ahl), Ahmed al Dosary (Hilal), Hussein Sulaiman (Ahl), Mohammed al Johani (Ahl), Khamis al Owairan (Hilal), Khamis al Zahran (Itihad), Ibrahim al Harbi (Nasr), Khalid al Tomawi (Hilal), Khalid al Muwallid (Ahl), Fadd Amin (Shabab), Hamza Saleh (Ahl), Abdul Aziz al Dosary (Itifaq), Obeid al Dosary (Wehda), Yousef al Thunayan (Hilal), Ibrahim al Shahab (Ahl), Salem Sarour al Alawi (Shabab), Mohammed al Sahafi (Itihad), Saeed al Owairan (Shabab), Samir al Jaber (Hilal), Fahad al Mehalal (Shabab), and Hussein al Sudqi (Qadisiyah).

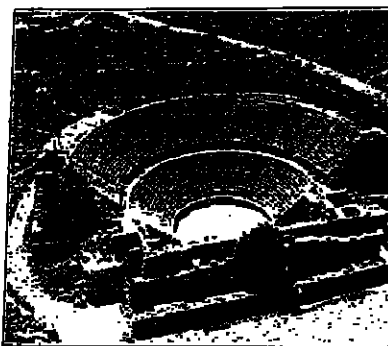


# Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

La Décapole, un foyer de culture au milieu des «barbares» par Véronique Abu-Nijmeh

La Décapole se définit comme une confédération de cités hellénisées pour la plupart situées sur le plateau transjordanien et le Hauran (Philadelphie, Gerasa, Pella, Amman...). En tant qu'entité politique ayant un territoire propre, la Décapole ne semble apparaitre qu'au III<sup>e</sup> siècle de notre ère. Mais avant d'être politiques, les liens qui unissent ces cités sont surtout culturels et existent déjà à l'époque hellénistique. Situées entre deux grandes puissances sémitiques, le royaume juif à l'ouest et le royaume nabatéen au sud et à l'est, ces villes se caractérisent par un attachement à la culture grecque et luttent pour préserver ce foyer de civilisation occidentale à leurs yeux la civilisation tout court au sein d'un environnement qui leur est parfois profondément hostile. Les relations avec leurs voisins, particulièrement avec les Juifs, étaient houleuses depuis la chute de l'empire séleucide qui ouvrait le champ aux convoitises des uns et des autres. La



L'amphithéâtre Sud à Jérash.

Décapole, c'est également, au milieu des monarchies orientales, une vie civile fondée sur les institutions démocratiques grecques. C'est une vie culturelle intense avec nombre de spectacles, festivals et concours. Chaque cité est dotée d'un théâtre qui représente à lui seul le signe que la ville n'appartient pas au monde «barbare». On voit surgir une élite intellectuelle qui inscrit dans l'histoire les noms de plusieurs philosophes et hommes de lettres. La Décapole est finalement un urbanisme monumental d'inspiration méditerranéenne qui dresse ses colonnes à l'orée du désert. On comprend dès lors aisément que la conquête romaine en 63 av. J. C. soit ressentie comme une délivrance pour ces cités, soumises aux sphères d'influences «barbares» depuis la chute des Séleucides. Pour célébrer l'événement, elles instituent des fêtes nouvelles et calculent leurs dates à partir de cette année.

Politique

## Coriace comme un syndicat pro

On n'avait pas vu cela depuis 1967. Le roi visitait la semaine dernière la Maison des Syndicats et déclarait : «Les associations socio-professionnelles jouissent de ma confiance». Malgré les nombreuses tentatives de les affaiblir, ces groupements, souvent dominés par des islamistes, comptent plus que jamais sur la scène politique.

### «Al-Naqabat

al-Mihaniyah», c'est-à-dire en arabe littéral, «les syndicats professionnels», constituent une composante majeure de la vie économique, politique et sociale du pays. Prés de 31000 ingénieurs, 9000 médecins, 6000 ingénieurs agronomes, 5500 pharmaciens, 5000 avocats, 4000 dentistes, 3000 infirmiers et infirmières, 2500 entrepreneurs, 2000 géologues, 1500 vétérinaires, 500 artistes, 400 écrivains, 360 journalistes et 150 comptables, au total, une force hétéroclite d'environ 72.000 membres. A priori rien de très effrayant mais ces associations ont su s'organiser au fil du temps.

### Fortes têtes

Les premières (avocats, dentistes et médecins) ont vu le jour au début des années 50. Les pharmaciens et les ingénieurs leur emboîtent le pas en 1957. Dix ans plus tard, c'est le tour des ingénieurs agronomes. Les autres associations naissent dans les années 70. Cette émergence de groupements de cadres et de professions libérales est la conséquence directe de la chute des jeunes Jordaniens vers les universités. Or, la première faculté jordanienne n'a été établie qu'en 1962. Les jeunes partent donc à l'étranger. Les partis politiques clandestins (communiste, baathiste...) accablent ainsi des bourses aux jeunes pour poursuivre leurs études supérieures dans les pays socialistes, en Syrie ou en Irak. C'est d'ailleurs une des raisons de la politisation des futurs syndicats.

D'autres choisissaient d'aller étudier en Égypte où, sous le régime socialiste de Nasser, les droits d'entrée étaient peu élevés. Plus tard, dans les années 70, les répercussions du boom pétrolier ont permis à de nombreuses familles d'envoyer



La visite du roi aux présidents des différentes associations socio-professionnelles a été saluée par l'ensemble de la classe politique.

leurs fils à l'étranger à leurs frais. Pour toute cette génération, le diplôme universitaire était devenu le visa indispensable pour accéder à la promotion sociale. D'autant que la Jordanie, en pleine modernisation, avait besoin de cette main d'œuvre qualifiée pour améliorer l'état de ses services (santé, éducation, eau, électricité, voirie etc...). Le gouvernement était même prêt à doubler les salaires pour retenir médecins ou ingénieurs attirés par les contrats alléchants des pays du Golfe.

Armés de diplômes et appuyés sur la classe moyenne et une partie de la classe populaire, les syndicats professionnels jouent très tôt un rôle politique important. Leurs membres sont souvent cultivés et disposent d'une conscience politique avancée et d'un certain prestige au sein de la société du fait de leur profession (surtout les avocats, les médecins ou les ingénieurs). De

nombreuses personnalités politiques (ministres, députés, opposants...) sont d'ailleurs issues de leurs rangs : l'entrepreneur Ali Abou Ragheb, le médecin Mamdouh Abbad, l'avocat Kamal Nasser et bien sûr, l'empêchement de tourner en rond Leïth Chbeilat, ancien député et ancien président de l'Ordre des ingénieurs. De fait il est difficile pour le pouvoir exécutif de manipuler ces fortes têtes. A contrario les ouvriers, pourtant plus nombreux, sont plus malades car ils subissent de plein fouet la crise économique, ont une faible conscience politique et une organisation syndicale inefficace.

### Contre-pouvoir

Bien enracinées dans la vie productive et sociale du pays, les associations socio-professionnelles ont su garantir aussi leur indépendance en mettant sur pied leurs propres caisses d'épargne, leurs aides au logement, leurs fonds pour

la retraite et la sécurité sociale. Et l'adhésion obligatoire au syndicat pour tout nouveau venu dans la profession leur permet de renouveler en permanence leurs effectifs.

Bref, depuis le début, bien qu'a priori de caractère strictement professionnel, elles se sont intéressées aux grandes questions nationales. De 1957 à 1992, période pendant laquelle les partis politiques étaient interdits, les associations étaient aux avant-postes pour les libertés publiques, la levée des lois martiales, le soutien aux Palestiniens ou encore la solidarité avec les Irakiens. Cette opposition larvée (souvent plus efficace que celle des partis politiques réhabilités après 1992) a souvent gêné le pouvoir en place. Récemment, les syndicats ont lancé une campagne de boycott des élections législatives 1997, en écho à celle des partis d'opposition en particulier le Front d'Action Islamique. De même, ils se sont engagés

dans la lutte contre la normalisation avec Israël.

Un contre-pouvoir, donc, que les gouvernements successifs ont vainement tenté de réduire. Déjà en 1978, un haut responsable conseillait aux dirigeants des associations de ne plus s'occuper de ce qui ne les regardait pas et de «laisser la politique aux politiques». En novembre 1988, le rédacteur en chef du quotidien Al-Rai Rakan Majali (imposé par le gouvernement) attaquait violemment les associations, à son avis, «trop politiques». La réplique a été immédiate. Elles ont donné la consigne à leurs membres de boycotter le journal ce qui l'a affaibli financièrement.

Depuis trois ans, les gouvernements manifestent l'intention de «régler le problème des associations» : certains veulent les «régionaliser» ou les «professionnaliser», d'autres estiment que «l'adhésion obligatoire a donné lieu à la dictature d'une minorité et qu'elle est incompatible avec les Droits de l'Homme». Il y a

quelques mois encore, le gouvernement souhaitait dissoudre les caisses d'épargne des associations. Face à la vague des protestations et aux mesures préventives prises par les différents ordres, le dossier a été rapidement classé sans suite.

Désormais le régime semble préférer la conciliation avec des syndicats aujourd'hui dominés par la plupart par les islamistes. Au moment où les perspectives de paix s'assombrissent et où la situation économique et sociale s'aggrave dans le pays, le geste du roi, il y a une semaine, signifie que l'heure n'est pas à la divergence mais plutôt à la convergence nationale. ■

Suleiman Sweiss

## L'hospice n'est pas ce que l'on croit

Les maisons de retraite sont encore un phénomène nouveau. Les Jordaniens pensent souvent qu'elles sont un moyen de se débarrasser des personnes âgées. Mais à Dar Al-Tyafa, on rencontre des «vieux» heureux.

### Exil, prison, décomposition

de la famille. À l'idée de placer leurs parents dans une maison de retraite, la plupart des Jordaniens s'indignent : «Dieu m'en préserve», disent-ils. Justement pour des raisons religieuses. L'islam met en garde les fidèles contre le manque de respect et la désobéissance à leurs parents surtout quand ils ont l'âge de la sagesse et conseille de ne jamais les négliger. «J'ai une mère qui est vieille et se plaint d'incontinence mais je ne pense pas à la placer dans une maison de repos car je trouve que cela serait un acte infamant et ni la religion ni la société ne l'admettent», déclare par exemple Abu-Rasse, un chauffeur de taxi. Aux principes religieux s'ajoutent les traditions ancestrales qui transforment le placement en hospice en acte

honteux qu'il vaut mieux éviter.

«Si je mets mes parents dans une maison de retraite, je ne mérite pas d'être respecté. Comment demander le respect d'autrui alors que je ne respecte même pas celui qui m'a élevé ?», s'interroge Ahmad, un chef d'entreprise. Dans ce climat suspicieux et hostile, la construction d'hospices relève en Jordanie d'un phénomène récent qui peine à émerger alors que dans tous les pays industrialisés, ces établissements sont devenus indispensables. Dar Al-Tyafa est la plus grande et la plus ancienne maison de retraite de Jordanie. Certaines femmes jordanaises voulaient aider et s'occuper des personnes âgées. En 1971, elles ont alors formé une petite association, raconte le directeur de l'hospice, Ahmad Rabab. Le nombre de patients qu'elles ont

soigné n'a depuis cette date cessé d'augmenter si bien qu'en 1979, une vraie maison de retraite a été bâtie sous le nom de «Dar Al-Tyafa», c'est-à-dire «maison de réception». Aujourd'hui c'est l'une des deux maisons de retraite en Jordanie et la seule publique. Les locataires de Dar Al-Tyafa ne sont pas des «vieux» abandonnés par des enfants ingrats. Au contraire, la majorité d'entre eux sont des personnes âgées avec des problèmes de santé physique ou psychologique graves qui nécessitent un suivi permanent par des spécialistes ou encore des marmies et des papas qui n'ont plus de famille pour les prendre en charge. C'est le cas de Youssa, 85 ans : «Je suis ici depuis longtemps. Je suis célibataire et n'ai plus de famille. Je suis malade et j'ai besoin de soins médicaux permanents. C'est



Les locataires de Dar Al-Tyafa peuvent s'adonner à leurs loisirs favoris.

pour cette raison que je n'ai pas pu rester à l'hôpital et que j'ai choisi de venir dans cette maison de retraite». L'un des médecins de l'hospice, Abed Al-Rahim, confirme cette fonction de refuge : «Nous avons une véritable handicapée qui a trouvé ici de l'affection et de l'occupation. Car elle n'a pas d'enfants pour s'occuper d'elle». Surtout, Dar Al-Tyafa n'a rien à voir avec un hôpital. Les patients peuvent y vivre presque normalement, fréquenter leurs loisirs préférés ou sortir pour se promener ou faire le marché. «Cette maison est une source de joie et d'espoir pour moi. Les médecins s'occupent de ma santé et je m'adonne à ma passion pour le dessin», témoigne Issa, 64 ans, sous dépendance sanitaire à la suite d'un accident. Pour le directeur, son établissement est ainsi l'espace privilégié de la reconstruction d'un environnement familial.

### Maudits soient mes fils

Pourtant les locataires de Dar Al-Tyafa ne sont pas tous aussi satisfaits d'y vivre leurs derniers jours. «Je ne suis pas heureuse d'être ici, je préférerais la mort plutôt que de continuer ainsi. J'aimerais bien retourner vivre parmi mes fils et petites-filles», singlote Oum Zaid, 75 ans, qui malgré dix enfants, vit dans la maison de retraite depuis dix ans. Quant à Oum Khaled, 77 ans, elle ne cache pas sa colère et n'hésite pas à mau-

dire sa descendance : «Dieu ne pardonne jamais mes fils qui m'ont jetée ici et ne viennent même pas me voir». Des enfants, coupables d'ingratitude et d'irrespect à l'égard de parents qu'ils exilent dans un hospice, contre leur gré ? Mis en accusation, ils se défendent en invoquant le manque de temps ou de moyens : «Ma mère est malade et elle a besoin de soins permanents et d'un contrôle continu. Ma femme et moi, nous travaillons tous les deux. Il n'y a personne d'autre pour s'occuper d'elle», explique Ahmad. «Je ne peux pas m'occuper de mon père, il est malade et je suis célibataire, je travaille dix heures par jour. Que puis-je faire ? Je n'ai pas le choix», insiste Zaki de son côté. Autant de situations particulières qui ne peuvent former une généralité.

Au bout du compte, demeure néanmoins cette mauvaise réputation des maisons de retraite considérées à tort comme un moyen de se débarrasser des personnes âgées. Dar Al-Tyafa tente de dépasser ces préjugés en organisant avec des écoles ou des associations, des excursions, des journées théâtrales ou même des visites lors de fêtes religieuses ou nationales. Une façon de briser la solitude de ces vieux messieurs et vieilles dames et de leur montrer que la société ne les a pas oubliés. ■

Textes et photos : Fatm Najib

## D'un cours à l'autre

Variétés

## Le charme de la chanson politique

Il n'y a pas que l'amour qui fait vendre. Nasser Irshaid, un Jordanien de 31 ans, le prouve avec son succès. Comment chanter, un hymne engagé pour la liberté et la justice.

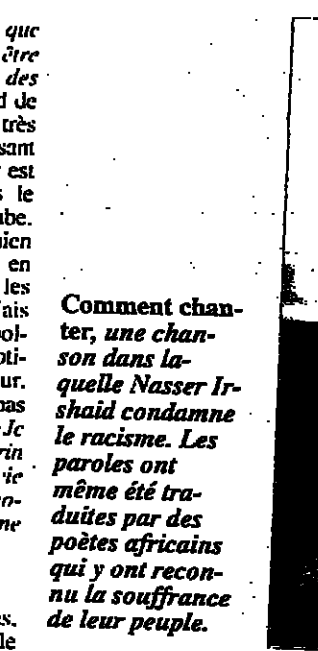
«Je veux prouver que la voix du chanteur peut être mieux écoutée que celle des hommes politiques». Regard de défi, Nasser Irshaid sait très bien qu'il détonne en disant cela. À 31 ans, ce chanteur est presque une curiosité dans le monde de la musique arabe. Premièrement, il est Jordanien quand les ados se pâment en majorité pour les Libanais, les Égyptiens ou les Irakiens. Mais surtout il préfère chanter la politique et les réalités quotidiennes plutôt que l'amour. Un handicap qui ne semble pas l'inquiéter plus que cela : «Je garde un optimisme à tout crin malgré les épreuves de la vie car mon métier exige une morale équilibrée et aussi une sorte d'intelligence sociale».

### Micro d'or

Sourire jusqu'aux oreilles, costume classique, Nasser a le look du parfait séducteur-chausson servant mais ce jongleur de mots a préféré s'ouvrir au monde. Son troisième album parle ainsi des difficultés du tiers-monde : «Je ne suis pas un chanteur engagé, nuance-t-il, mais j'ai quand même envie de parler des histoires des gens». Dans *Comment chanter*, il condamne le racisme en partant d'un simple constat : nous sommes tous égaux et nous avons les mêmes droits de vivre en paix. C'est : chanson témoignage du regard sans complaisance des pays occidentaux sur le tiers-monde et de l'instabilité politique de notre région : «C'est l'image sombre qu'ont les Occidentaux vis-à-vis du tiers-monde», explique le chanteur. Un thème qui dépasse les frontières du monde arabe puisque la chanson a été traduite par des poètes en Afrique du Sud, qui y ont reconnu la souffrance du peuple africain. Ce tube a obtenu le micro d'or lors du dernier festival de la chanson arabe en 1996 à Bahrein. Un succès qui lance définitivement la carrière de Nasser après des débuts hésitants.

En 1985, il a 19 ans et part tenter sa chance en Égypte : «C'est le centre de tous les genres de la musique arabe. Et puis les Égyptiens ont du goût, ils sont capables de faire la différence entre les bons et mauvais chanteurs», raconte-t-il toujours avec cet air de défi. Mais après une tentative ratée avec un groupe de variétés, il décide de rentrer en Jordanie. Se succèdent une série de participations au festival de Jérash et diverses collaborations collectives avant le succès de son premier album solo.

Fort de sa toute nouvelle célébrité, Nasser Irshaid travaille aujourd'hui sur son prochain album avec l'immeuble Kazem Al-Saher qui lui écrit les paroles. Plus que jamais il veut continuer sur la voie des chansons à thèmes graves et sérieux : au programme, le travail des enfants ou la peur de l'Occident à l'égard de l'Islam.



Comment chanter, une chanson dans laquelle Nasser Irshaid condamne le racisme. Les paroles ont même été traduites par des poètes africains qui y ont reconnu la souffrance de leur peuple.

## Obispo entre deux «O»

C'est l'histoire d'un homme qui a tant pour y arriver. Il y a eu l'Obispo, l'empereur du monde, l'empereur d'inspiration, l'empereur de la mode, l'empereur de la culture, l'empereur de la politique, l'empereur de la religion, l'empereur de la science, l'empereur de la philosophie, l'empereur de la littérature, l'empereur de la musique, l'empereur de la peinture, l'empereur de la sculpture, l'empereur de la danse, l'empereur de la poésie, l'empereur de la prose, l'empereur de la dramaturgie, l'empereur de la musique, l'empereur de la peinture, l'empereur de la sculpture, l'empereur de la danse, l'empereur de la poésie, l'empereur de la prose, l'empereur de la dramaturgie.

Obispo, né en 1931, rencontre enfin le succès avec son premier album, *Obispo*, qui a été un succès mondial. Il a écrit et composé tous les morceaux de cet album, qui a été un succès mondial. Il a écrit et composé tous les morceaux de cet album, qui a été un succès mondial.

Le Jourdain



Pascal Obispo, en tournée dans le nord de la France.

## C'est la vie

L'agenda culturel français d'Amman



### Exposition 1

En 1995, l'artiste algérien Rachid Koraichi (voir photo) travaillait sur des jarres d'argile avec des potiers tunisiens. Un jour, au cours de leur cuisson, de violents orages éclatèrent, détruisant les fours et leur contenu. Deux ans plus tard, le peintre a repris ce projet en France avec l'aide notamment des potiers d'Anduze et de Saint Quentin la Poterie. C'est une partie de cette production (7 vases d'Anduze, 14 jarres à olives, ainsi que 7 voiles de soie) qui est présentée au Centre culturel français et à Darat al Funun pendant un mois du 2 juin au 2 juillet. Renseignements au CCF au 4637009 ou 4636445.

### Exposition 2

Une série de maquettes et de photos pour découvrir le travail de l'architecte français Christian de Portzamparc (Tour LVMH 3 New York, Cité de la Musique à Paris) jusqu'au 4 juin à la faculté d'architecture de l'Université de Jordanie.



L'état de santé des personnes âgées nécessite parfois des soins importants.

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Festival welds high art, low comedy

## Cannes focuses on 'surreal merriment'

By Nigel Andrews

ABSURDITY IS the movie flavour of the 51st Cannes Film Festival. And what other style or mood could possibly suit the event?

Dignity and indignity, high art and low motive, have fought it out almost every night. This is a festival where the length of movie queues has been dictated less by film merit than by the censorship palavers stirred up by, say, Lars Von Trier's 'Idiot' or Todd Solondz's 'Happiness'. This is a festival in which cinema-goers had no sooner commemorated a great crooner's death—with a Sinatra song played over the speakers followed by a brief respectful silence—than a completely barmy Taiwanese film unspooled full of Hollywood-spoofing musical numbers. (For details read on.) And on one night of torrential rain, only Fellini could have done justice to the dinner jackets and Givenchy dresses blown about and drenched by the invertebrate elements.

Sometimes, though, the sublime and ridiculous are synonymous, or at least symbiotic. 'Idiot' is the film all Cannes was waiting for, mainly because it has thrown Danish censors for a loop with its brief yet intense sexual close-ups. Those who came to ogle, however, stayed to marvel. The scene is merely one jaw-dropper in a spectacularly unnerving comedy from Denmark's top enfant terrible.

A group of commune-dwelling friends masquerade as mental retardards, going out into streets, restaurants or public places to embarrass the citizenry. Filmmaker Trier doesn't condemn or condone. We must decide if this is cruel recreational mockery or a real attempt by the friends, as one puts it, "to get in touch with their inner idiots."

The film is never funny without being shocking, and never shocking without being thought-provoking. The mood-swings are dazzling: we cut in an instant from custard-pie farce to social horror, from the 'athletic' workout that so worries the Copenhagen consorts to a chastely tender love scene. 'Idiot' proves Trier himself the most versatile auteur in the business. The Golden Palm has a clear winner, if the jury has the nerve to recognize it.

'Happiness' shows in the non-competitive Directors Fortnight, has been the sleeper of the side-shows. Where Todd Solondz's only previous feature 'Welcome To The Dollhouse' was a gnostic black comedy about teenage life, this is a broad-sweep social-sexual satire, a sort of 'Short Cuts' on a long fuse. The cast comprises three sisters and half-a-dozen connecting characters, including a woebegone shrink (Dylan Baker), a precocious pubescent boy, and a walking laundry bag of sexual neuroses unforgettably played by 'Boogie Nights' Philip Seymour Hoffman.

The film's explosive themes will probably ensure as long a sojourn as 'Idiot' in the office of the censor. But too much snipping and cutting would ruin the power and charm of a film that presents human desire as a vast planetary curse: one providing surreal merriment at best, at worst holding an instructive mirror to our deepest natures.

Hal Hartley's enigmatic 'Henry Fool' is yet another dark yet bristly comic psychological adventure in which a mystery stranger (Thomas Jay Ryan) bristly seduces a family's womenfolk before turning the son into a literary genius. (It is Pasolini's 'Theorem' gone to New England.) And in Taiwan's 'The Hole'...

Well, in 'The Hole', what exactly? I called the film barmy earlier, but it is of course as barmy as a fox. A giant absurdist caprice from Tsai Ming-liang, who made the more sober if no less cryptic prize-winners 'Long Live Love' and 'The River', the movie is also a wonderfully cheeky fable of birth, sex and regression. As a young tenant (Ming-liang, regular Yang Kwei-mei) and his downstairs female neighbor battle with a city gripped by rain, disease and mysterious apophonia, their very apartments seem to perform a mating ritual.

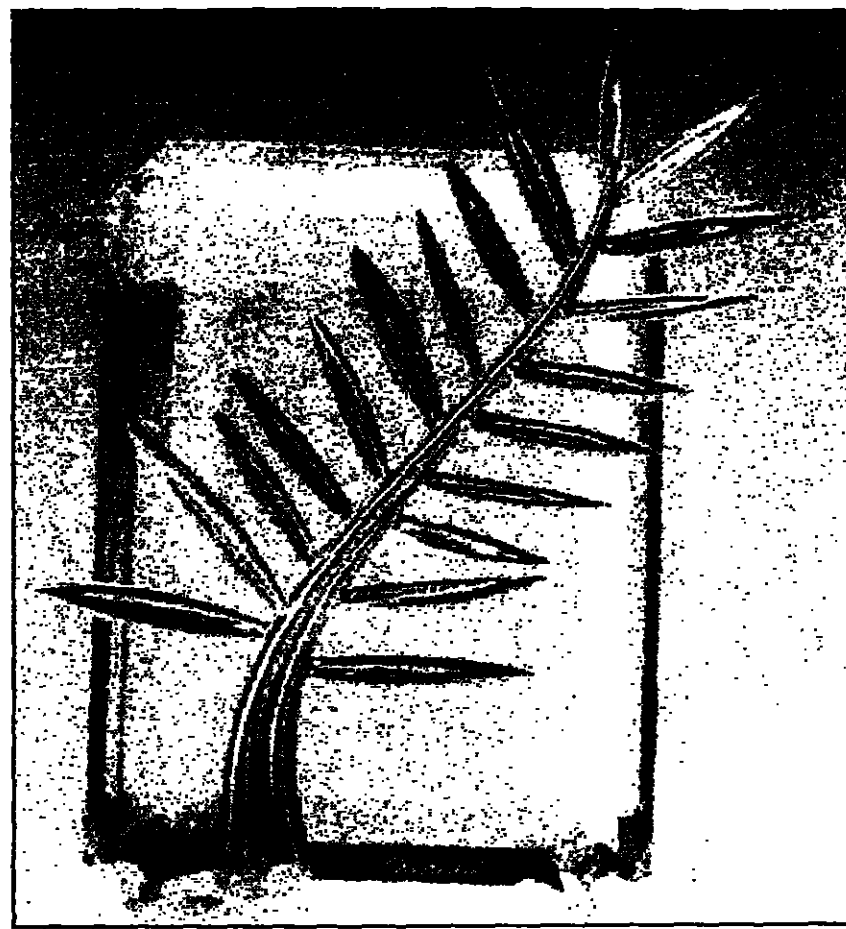
Fluids are exchanged (rain-leaks); orifices are opened up (hole in boy's floor); body-parts inserted (boy sticks a swinging leg through). And the film goes beyond a comical cryptogram about sex: it hints at

other fundamentals. Is the hero trying to get back to the womb? Is the whole of water-swept humanity trying to get back to the ocean? Like all great minimalist art, from Japanese haikus to Beckett, Ming-liang uses the trivial to open up the infinite.

Elsewhere Cannes has been the usual crash course in global celluloid, one for which a crash helmet is sometimes needed to survive. Concussed by Hou Hsiao-hsien's 'Flowers Of Shanghai', a series of weighty tableaux—barely—rivaled set in a dim-lit brothel, you then move to the Greek-Australian 'Head On' (gay life with a hand-held camera) or France's 'La Classe De Neige' (sensitive growing-up tale scuppered by grand guignol payoff) or the Iranian 'The Apple'.

This last was popular with some, who compared it with that other Tehran trouville first hailed at Cannes, 'The White Balloon'. The real-life story behind Samira Makhmalbaf's dramatized documentary is intriguing. Two young sisters were shut up by their parents for 12 years—unwashed, unexercised, uneducated—until social workers freed them. But the liberation story we watch on screen is more ambiguous. How much was staged, or restaged, for the camera? Were scenes ad-libbed or scripted? Are we watching fact, fiction, or fable?

More honest, even exultant, in its aesthetic bewilderments and multiple



exposures was Nanni Moretti's 'Aprile'. With Roberto Benigni's 'La Vita E Bella' this provided a dual Italian high point in

mid-festival, two free-flying comedies on cautionary themes. 'Aprile' is a personal memoir like the bearded filmmaker-comedian's last Cannes hit 'Dear Diary'. This time he alternates delight as a new father with agonized semi-involvement in the political scene, shooting a 'Right is wrong' documentary about a country gripped by Berlusconi and Umberto Bossi. The film sprawls a little, but Moretti's mournful-mirthful personality is so enchanting we forgive him the longeurs as well as the left-wing lectures.

Some festival-goers refused to forgive Benigni. Italy's other top comedian/auteur, for his Nazi concentration camp scenes in 'La Vita E Bella'. This often brilliant second world war comedy takes its hero, played by the spike-haired director, all the way from pre-war scenes as a waiter, to a scene in which he addresses a school, hilariously, on 'Aryan superiority.' In the sulags. Though there is comedy and even some sentimentality in the camp scenes, where the hero fortifies his little son by pretending that it is all a game with points for survival. Benigni also employs considerable skill, wit and tact.

Besides, isn't 50 years a long enough period for strict mourning over the Nazi era? Mustn't a time come when history is opened up—even the bleakest recent history—to the full range of quirky artistic response? And where better to do this than in a film festival where almost every other taboo seems to have bitten the Cote d'Azur dust. ■

Financial Times Syndication

## From film unknown to hot shot overnight

By Amy Wallace

CANNES, France—The battle to buy the first commercial discovery of the 1998 Cannes International Film Festival began quietly enough.

No one had seen 'Waking Ned', a comedy made with no movie stars by a British first-time writer-director, before its first screening on Monday afternoon. The 33-year-old filmmaker, Kirk Jones, had just driven the print down from London—a 15-hour trip—because plane tickets were too expensive. He didn't even have any promotional posters.

"Cannes is so much about hype, but we just snuck in the back door," Jones said of his film. Snuck in, that is, and took the place by storm.

On Tuesday, just 20 hours after distributors got their first look, Fox Searchlight bought the comedy, which chronicles what happens to a tiny Irish village when one of its residents wins the lottery. Sources said Fox paid more than \$4 million for the rights to distribute the film in North and South America.

But the victory—won after a grueling, five-night competition during which several distributors made entreaties via cellular phones—did not come easy.

That the deal was done in less than a day shows how swiftly business gets done in Cannes, where fierce rivalries force almost instantaneous decisions. That the battle was so short and quiet was

thing, moreover, about this year's festival, which features few "audience pleasers" that have not already been bought by distributors.

Before the festival began, Miramax bought two popular films in competition here—Todd Haynes' 'Velvet Goldmine' and Roberto Benigni's 'Life Is Beautiful'. Similarly, Todd Solondz's much talked about 'Happiness' arrived in Cannes already represented by October.

So 'Waking Ned', which is not officially connected to the festival but is screening at the film market, was a welcome surprise. Especially after word got around that it could be another 'Full Monty'—the British blockbuster, made for less than \$4 million, that has grossed \$247 million to date for Fox Searchlight.

Jones, a commercial director who lives in London, said he based his film on a tiny newspaper clipping about a post mistress in South Wales whose neighbors suspected she had won the lottery. "She put a sign in her window: 'No, I have not won.' I thought the idea of a small community dealing with a winner in their midst was compelling," Jones said.

The film was financed, in part, by pre-selling the distribution rights in France and Britain. The film commission from the Isle of Man, where the film was shot, also kicked in some money.

By happenstance, Law said, he found out that the

film was screening for the first time here and made a point of showing up. He wasn't alone.

The minute that first screening ended, the hustle began.

"You hope you'll see a movie like this," Law explained. "Then, you say, 'If I see this is wonderful, I won't be the only one.' Then, you panic."

Distributors beat a hasty path for the Noga Hilton, the headquarters of the Overseas Film Group, which was selling the film. But the company's chairman, Robert Little, was out.

Little's cellular phone soon started ringing incessantly. Amir Malin, the co-president of Artisan, one of the companies competing for distribution rights, had had three scouts at the screening and on the basis of their enthusiasm, he tracked Little down.

"They told me it was like 'Local Hero,'" he said, referring to the Bill Forsyth film about an American oil company hoping to locate a big operation in a small Scottish town. Malin made his offer that night. But Little had promised other distributors not to commit to any company before Tuesday's screening.

Law and his colleagues at Fox Searchlight were also calling. They finally reached Little while he was eating dinner at a pricey hillside restaurant called the Colombe d'Or.

"We called him every 10 minutes, though when

his main course arrived, he wisely turned (his phone) off," Law said. "We said, 'We'll pick up your entire dinner bill if you'll make a deal right now.' But he honored his agreement and made us wait."

The calls, Little recalled, "continued until 2:30 in the morning."

Fox Searchlight had some advantages going into the negotiations. Its track record with 'Full Monty', Law said, is so well known to British filmmakers that he didn't even have to bring it up. Moreover, the company has just released 'Shooting Fish', a Stefan Schwartzmalouf film whose producer, Richard Holmes, is also a producer of 'Waking Ned'.

Nevertheless, Law said, anxiety about the possibility of losing the film kept him awake all night. "I went to bed at 3 am and lay there until 6, when I got up and ordered breakfast."

Tuesday's screening began at 11:30 am Half an hour after it ended, the deal was done.

Jones, the filmmaker, said he was thrilled, particularly because his movie is an upbeat tale—a cinematic style that has not been in vogue of late.

"Part of me wants to go crazy," he said with controlled enthusiasm. "But I'm very down to earth. As soon as I let it go to my head, I'll be lost." ■

LA Times - Washington Post News Service

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# THE STAR'S WORKSTATION COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser

## Suppliers: Ten reasons to go with Pentium II Why you should buy the Pentium system

**HARDWARE SUPPLIERS** have put together a list of reasons why customers are better off purchasing a Pentium II system, especially business users. These five points are worth looking at. If you intend to purchase a PC, Pentium II is an appealing, and safe, option.

**Pentium II gives you cost-effective investment protection today for both the near and far futures.**

If you want a system that won't leave you feeling left out a year or two from now, you'll want Pentium II.

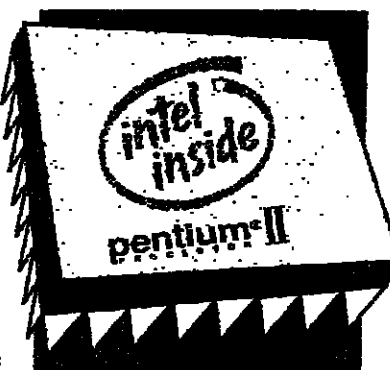
Pentium II systems, with a low inventory strategy, can pass on the latest low prices onto Pentium II chips to customers, giving them a window of opportunity to make a valuable investment at the lowest price.

**Need for new HDD, RAM and graphics performance-boosting technology**

Pentium II supports AGP (Advanced Graphics Port) which enhances business graphics performance by 5 to 15 percent. Also, it supports SDRAM which increases memory speed by 30 to 40 percent—essential for running graphics applications efficiently.

It also supports ATA33 Hard Disk drivers, the new HDD technology that allows data transfer from memory to HDD twice as fast. For busi-

ness users this means that saving big jobs (such as large PowerPoint presentations) to disk is performed twice as fast.



**Pentium II supports new technology that increases overall performance and network architecture efficiency.**

Pentium II supports the new port technology, USB, which enables data transfer at speeds between 1.5 and 12 Mbps (of serial port speed of 115Kbps) and can have several devices attached, resulting in decreased clutter and less complex cabling.

**Necessary for next-generation networking technology**

Investing in Pentium II now makes the network ready for ACPI—the new power-managing network technology. ACPI allows the network to stay in a "power-down" state, only powering up the parts

actually in use, resulting in major energy savings.

**Pentium II is designed to run today's 32-bit applications**

Office applications, such as Office 97, demand the best processors to run most efficiently as they are much bigger and more data-intensive than previous 16-bit applications.

**Will be necessary to run NT5 and Windows 98**

Investing in Pentium II now will save costs and effort when making a transition to upcoming operating systems, like Windows 98 and Windows NT 5.

**The Single Edge Contact Cartridge (SECC), to be used in all Intel processors**

Future processor upgrades will be cost-effective as there are no further development costs, which means lower upgrade costs and easier transitions for customers.

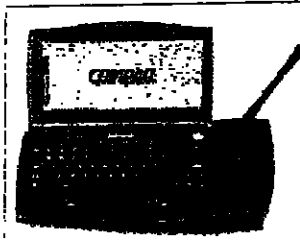
**Outperforms all other Pentium processors under Windows NT 4**

Using Winstone 97 Business, Pentium II 233 MHz is 17 percent faster than Pentium 200 with MMX 15 percent faster than Pentium 233 with MMX. Using Winstone 97 High-end, Pentium II 233MHz is 33 percent faster than Pentium 200 with MMX 30 percent faster than Pentium 233

## Compaq Freedom C-Series Handheld PC

COMPAQ COMPUTER Middle East, Mediterranean & Africa (MENA) has announced the launch of its C-Series Handheld PC, the first professional handheld PC aimed at mobile business users who require fast, easy and secure access to information.

The Compaq-designed C-Series is the first handheld PC with Data Security and Asset Management functionality, providing the business user with a secure mobile extension to a networked PC. Compaq's C-Series also features a high-speed 33.6 Kbps, integrated modem, easy set-up and exclusive software bundles, and support for the Microsoft Windows CE 2.0 operating system.



The C-Series is optimized for Windows CE providing instant 'on' fast calculations and smooth scrolling through documents. In addition, the high-performance 33.6 Kbps integrated modem provides fast and easy access to e-mail, connection with the user's remote PC and Internet access. A colour or monochrome screen supports a

640 x 240 resolution with a double bright backlit display allowing users to choose between two brightness settings to improve viewing in different lighting conditions.

The Compaq C-Series links to a PC using a bundled serial cable or infrareds. Microsoft Windows CE Service automatically detects a connected handheld device and initiates communication to provide automatic/continuous replication of calendar, tasks, e-mails, contacts and business critical files. Compaq's C-Series can be connected either to a corporate LAN through a Remote Access Service account or to the Internet through an Internet Service Provider.

## Fastlink selects Great Plains for Arabic-enabled financial solution

GREAT PLAINS Software has been chosen by Jordan Mobile Telephone Services (JMTS)—Fastlink—to design and deliver a new financial and accounting software solution for its operations. Signed earlier this month in Amman, Fastlink purchased a Great Plains Dynamics Client/Server Plus (CS+) English/Arabic financial management system for its national opera-

tions. The Great Plains Dynamics system replaces Fastlink's existing Client/Server financial management system. Strong local support via Resource, the local Value-Added Reseller (VAR), was a major factor for the switch.

Great Plains Software is a leading provider of Microsoft Windows NT-based client/server financial management

software for mid-market business. The company's award-winning products and services automate essential accounting functions and enhance the strategic value of information. Great Plains Software Middle East is based in Dubai and offers training, consulting and customization services throughout its network in the Middle East. ■

## News update

**Lotus Notes takes off in Europe and Middle East**

● Lotus announced a 400 percent increase in licensed Lotus Notes and Lotus Domino users in Europe and the Middle East.

This massive growth signals a move towards adopting groupware and Knowledge Management Solutions in those areas and further increases the potential of Lotus' upcoming Arabic versions of its software. Lotus intends to unveil the Arabic ver-

sion of Notes Release 5 at GITEX 98, held in Dubai in October this year.

**Aptec merges with L&H**

● BYTE Middle East magazine reported that a \$17.5 million deal has been struck by which Lernout & Hauspie (L&H) has acquired Aptec Applications Technology, creating a force Arabization and multi-lingual technology.

Aptec is an Arab-owned

company based in Virginia, USA, which pioneered automatic Arabic/English translation technology. The new deal will allow Aptec to maintain independent management, and will focus on Internet multi-lingual technology development. It is worth noting that Microsoft Corp. owns an eight percent stake in L & H, adding to the strength of this newly formed alliance. Look for Aptec's upcoming products and activities.

**Dowlog opens regional office in Amman**

● Saudi software company, Dowlog (Al Dawlog) has recently opened a regional office in Amman as part of the company's expansion into neighboring markets. Dowlog produces educational software, based on national curriculum, published on CD-ROM. The idea is to primarily serve the Levant and Egyptian markets.

with MMX.

**Necessary to get the most out of Windows NT 4**

For corporate purposes NT4 is the preferred operating system as it allows for better data security, because of its file system, and it is more stable than Windows 95. It is also easier to upgrade to the upcoming NT 5.

**Enhances performance gained from RAM upgrades**

Most business users need more RAM than the basic 32MB, as they run several applications simultaneously. Upgrading to 64MB with a Pentium MMX processor gives a performance gain of 2 percent on Winstone 97 Business, but with Pentium II the gain is 20 percent, running Windows NT 4. ■

## French style on display

Under the patronage of the French Embassy and sponsored by Le Meridien Amman, Air France, TNT Sky-pak, Safeway, Dajani Group and Coca Cola, a fashion show took place at the Le Meridien. It was organized by Le Printemps, the largest fashion department store in Paris, and it presented the best in spring and summer collection by such famous names as Louis Feraud, T.L. Scherrer, Emmanuelle Khan and Jacques Fath.



On the catwalk



## Specks of luxury in a turquoise sea

By J. D. F. Jones

HERE IS a place where there is nothing to do. There are no temples or monuments, no archaeological sites, no museums, no game parks or protected species, no folk dancing, no shops and no discos.

What a relief. All you are required to do in the Maldives is to sit on your verandah, to lie on your beach, to look out on the purest turquoise sea and perhaps to swim in it, to allow various charming locals to bring you food and drink in abundance at any hour you choose, and to consider and even decline the offer of scuba diving, snorkeling, sailing, big game fishing, that sort of thing.

They are a sequence of specks of sand in the depths of the Indian Ocean, 1,200 of them, almost on the Equator, and none of them is more than a few feet high. We talk nervously of global warming and the fact that scientists propose that the Maldives will vanish under the waves within 30 years—some say less.

Only 200 of these "islands," grouped into atolls, are inhabited, and there is a strict division between the rural fishing islands of the local Moslem population and the small number opened to international tourism.

Whether the government can indefinitely (or for the allotted 30 years) maintain the distinction seems doubtful. The capital, Male, is modernizing rapidly as the tourist money pours in, but the outer islands are certainly strictly segregated and will continue to be so if only because there is, quite simply, only room for one hotel on each of them.

A typical luxury establishment, such as the Banyan Tree, crams 48 chalets on to an out-crop of terra firma only 400 yards in diameter, and even that is being eroded alarmingly, so they have to spend a fortune on sandbags and coral walls to keep the tides at bay. The islands all enjoy an

exquisitely beautiful situation, but the problem was, and remains, their inaccessibility. It is a long flight from Europe or the Far East and most travellers have to go via Dubai or Sri Lanka or Trivandrum in south India. Then there is the final shuttle out to the resorts, by seaplane or helicopter, fast launch or the slow, local dhonis. It used to take 10 hours in a dhoni to get from Male to one of the best resorts, Soneva Fushi, on Kufundhoo island, where the first hotel was attempted in the early 1980s and, not surprisingly, failed. Today, you get there by seaplane in about half-

a bar which stays awake as long as you do. Some rooms suggest that Robinson Crusoe has come to the Savoy, with simple and elegant furniture in bamboo and teak.

Most important of all, the island may be small—one mile by a quarter—but there is no sense of living cheek by jowl with your fellow guests. Like many of the other resorts, Soneva Fushi is obsessively eco-friendly. The coral is protected, you are expected to return your marlin or tuna unharmed to the ocean, and there are hopes of turning the lagoon into a marine park.

Turtles occupy one end of the island, dolphins the other. The Banyan Tree on Valbinafuru, an easier 20-minute dash by launch from Male, does not have quite the same feeling of exclusiveness, although it is certainly luxurious. Three years' old with 48 rooms, it has attractive individual chalets of Indonesian style with conical thatched roofs. It is part of the Asian group which first developed Thailand's Phuket. Again, it has every facility you could imagine, including jacuzzis, but the big differences with Soneva Fushi are that the island is smaller (and there is a distinctly lesser sense of privacy) and it does not have air-conditioning. This is an important consideration. The Maldives are very hot, although the sea is a few yards away and is wonderfully warm yet at the same time refreshing.

Although these places do not come cheap, they claim a high percentage of return clients. It must be to do with the extraordinary combination of turquoise shallows, deep blue ocean beyond the reef, blinding white sand, and the certainty that you can hardly hope to get away from it all so completely without yet being cosseted as you never are at home. ■

Financial Times/Sunday

Window on Jordan

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